

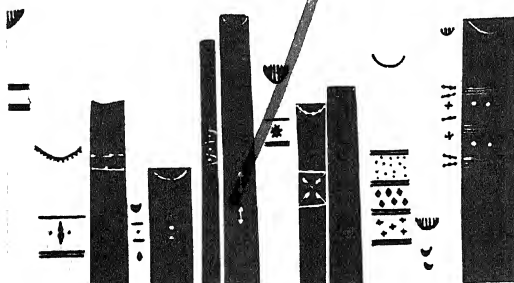
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**TWENTY-FIVE
MODERN PLAYS**

TWENTY-FIVE MODERN PLAYS

EDITED BY

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The Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn*

THIRD EDITION

BY

ALAN S. DOWNER

Princeton University



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CONTENTS

	PAGE
<i>General Introduction</i>	vii
ROSMERSHOLM, <i>by Henrik Ibsen</i>	1
COMRADES, <i>by August Strindberg</i>	43
PELLÉAS AND MÉLISANDE, <i>by Maurice Maeterlinck</i>	71
LIGHT-O'-LOVE, <i>by Arthur Schnitzler</i>	97
THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST, <i>by Oscar Wilde</i>	125
CYRANO DE BERGERAC, <i>by Edmond Rostand</i>	159
THE LOWER DEPTHS, <i>by Maxim Gorky</i>	225
THE CHERRY ORCHARD, <i>by Anton Tchekhov</i>	263
RIDERS TO THE SEA, <i>by J. M. Synge</i>	293
THE THUNDERBOLT, <i>by Sir Arthur Wing Pinero</i>	303
LILIOM, <i>by Ferenc Molnar</i>	361
THE RATS, <i>by Gerhart Hauptmann</i>	401
LA MALQUERIDA [THE PASSION FLOWER], <i>by Jacinto Benavente</i>	455
HE WHO GETS SLAPPED, <i>by Leonid Andreyev</i>	485
JOHN FERGUSON, <i>by St. John Ervine</i>	527
THE CORAL; GAS, PART I; GAS, PART II, <i>by Georg Kaiser</i>	573
R.U.R., <i>by Karel Capek</i>	641
THE SILVER CORD, <i>by Sidney Howard</i>	675
THE PLOUGH AND THE STARS, <i>by Sean O'Casey</i>	721
THE GREAT GOD BROWN, <i>by Eugene O'Neill</i>	765
ROADSIDE, <i>by Lynn Riggs</i>	801
THE INFERNAL MACHINE, <i>by Jean Cocteau</i>	839
MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL, <i>by T. S. Eliot</i>	879
A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE, <i>by Tennessee Williams</i>	905
DEATH OF A SALESMAN, <i>by Arthur Miller</i>	953
<i>A List of Suggested Readings</i>	1003
A GROUP OF ILLUSTRATIONS FOLLOWS PAGE	490

PLAYS LISTED BY COUNTRIES

	AUSTRIA	PAGE
<i>Light-o'-Love</i> , by Arthur Schnitzler		97
	BELGIUM	
<i>Pelléas and Mélisande</i> , by Maurice Maeterlinck		71
	CZECHO-SLOVAKIA	
<i>R.U.R.</i> , by Karel Capek		641
	FRANCE	
<i>Cyrano de Bergerac</i> , by Edmond Rostand		159
<i>The Infernal Machine</i> , by Jean Cocteau		839
	GERMANY	
<i>The Coral; Gas, Part I; Gas, Part II</i> , by Georg Kaiser		573
<i>The Rats</i> , by Gerhart Hauptmann		401
	GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND	
<i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i> , by Oscar Wilde		125
<i>The Thunderbolt</i> , by Arthur W. Pinero		303
<i>Riders to the Sea</i> , by J. M. Synge		293
<i>The Plough and the Stars</i> , by Sean O'Casey		721
<i>Murder in the Cathedral</i> , by T. S. Eliot		879
<i>John Ferguson</i> , by St. John Ervine		527
	HUNGARY	
<i>Liliom</i> , by Ferenc Molnar		361
	NORWAY	
<i>Rosmersholm</i> , by Henrik Ibsen		1
	RUSSIA	
<i>The Cherry Orchard</i> , by Anton Tchekhov		263
<i>He Who Gets Slapped</i> , by Leonid Andreyev		485
<i>The Lower Depths</i> , by Maxim Gorky		225
	SPAIN	
<i>La Malquerida</i> , by Jacinto Benavente		455
	SWEDEN	
<i>Comrades</i> , by August Strindberg		43
	THE UNITED STATES	
<i>The Great God Brown</i> , by Eugene O'Neill		765
<i>The Silver Cord</i> , by Sidney Howard		675
<i>Roadside</i> , by Lynn Riggs		801
<i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i> , by Tennessee Williams		905
<i>Death of a Salesman</i> , by Arthur Miller		953

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

What Is *Modern Drama*?

"Modern drama" is a term at once ambiguous and definitive. A collection of classical Greek tragedies, or Spanish comedies of the Golden Age, or Elizabethan or French dramas, has a homogeneity of both form and national idea. Intended for a particular audience, a particular theatre building, a particular national or philosophical frame of reference, they may be profitably studied as a unit, almost in isolation. There is no one form of modern drama, no single national or philosophical background; that is what makes it ambiguous. On the other hand, its very internationalism, or non-nationalism, defines it to a considerable extent. It is an art without a country, a vehicle for the expression of the ideas and ideals of an ever narrowing world. The great dramatist, whether he be Ibsen, or Shaw, or Giraudoux, is instantly at home in all countries, with all audiences.

The Heritage of the Nineteenth Century

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the theatre was weighed down by an inheritance of stale ideas and a dramatic form which had outlived its usefulness. This was, of course, the old "romantic" form, which ignored the tight unities of Aristotelian theory. This romantic form was ideally suited to the spacious visions of the Elizabethans and to the bare stage on which their plays were acted, but it became increasingly awkward in a theatre that leaned ever more heavily on realistic scenery. The subject matter—love and honor in incredibly high places—tended to be completely removed from the life and interests of the audience. Victor Hugo, for example, insisted on telling a romantic tale about a Castilian noble whose concern for his honor led him to kill himself (at the very moment when his king had restored him to his lands and rights and when his ladylove was about to become his wife), because he had once made a rash promise to the villain. In England, James Sheridan Knowles was attempting to arouse the sympathy of audiences for a Roman father who murdered his daughter to protect her from dishonor. As a result the theatre, the legitimate theatre, was having a rather serious struggle for its existence: not simply because the settings and characters of these plays were remote—the spectacle of the past has always been one of the chief attractions of the theatre—but because the themes and ideas were remote. A vital drama must grow out of the life and ideas of its own time.

Melodrama

The vital drama of the early nineteenth century, then, was not to be found in the officially supported legitimate theatres. It was rather to be sought in

the illegitimate popular houses devoted to melodrama, to plays of horror and excitement which were, nonetheless, concerned with human problems of the day. The plays of the Englishman, Douglas Jerrold, are perhaps a good instance. To be sure, he is fond of last-minute reprieves, of chairs which providentially fall apart to disclose hidden gold, of unreal catastrophes growing out of a thirst for alcohol. But the people of his plays, however crudely stereotyped, were recognizable to their audiences: simple sailors, hard-working farmers, ne'er-do-well sons. It is in the melodrama, not in the legitimate drama of the time, that you find factory hands, and railroad engines, and detectives, and telegraph offices, and ragpickers. In Victorian melodrama and its French equivalent the drama was returning to its function of reflecting and commenting on the life of its own day. The reflection is never wholly true; the commentary is for the most part pious balderdash; but the dramatist was at least aware of the physical changes of his world, if he totally ignored the change in manners and morals.

The Nineteenth-Century Background

The older world, the eighteenth-century world, the world for which imitations of classical tragedy and comedy were more or less satisfactory, may be summed up with partial accuracy as the Age of Reason. That is, it was an age which seemed to have found the answers to all the questions that confronted it. The moral code, the religious and political systems had been long established; for the most part the men of that world were willing to conform to them. For at least one of its great artists the whole basis of human behavior was contained in the phrase, "Whatever is, is right."

The early nineteenth century, however, beginning to feel the impact of industrial invention and scientific discovery, was an Age of Questioning. And out of the ferments of industrial and political revolutions and the questioning of the moral and religious basis of society came the forms and subject matter of the modern drama. True, since the theatre is the most conventional of the arts and prefers to follow rather than lead its audiences, the new forms and the new subject matter were slow in developing. By 1850, for instance, the English drama was nearly half a century behind the times. And even in the nineties Shaw could include this passage of dialogue in *You Never Can Tell*:

McComas. We're old-fashioned; the world thinks it has left us behind. There is only one place in all England where your opinions would still pass as advanced.

Mrs. Clandon [scornfully unconvinced]. The Church, perhaps?

McComas. No, the theater.

But rather surprisingly in the face of the usual attacks on the theatre by its critics, the reform of the drama came from within, spontaneously, from the theatre itself, not in response to public demand or, at least on the Continent, from the support of an interested clique.

The New Theatre movement was world-wide, (a) beginning in some countries with the physical aspects of play production, (b) beginning in others with the work of playwrights sensitive to the changes in their world.

A. The Reform of the Theatre

The production of a play in 1800 was very little different from its production in 1700. The theatre was still an ornate, ill-lighted cavern with the audience carefully stratified into pit, boxes, and gallery, according to its financial and social position. The settings were of the wing-and-drop variety: a backdrop painted in perspective at the rear of the stage and a series of huge flats or wings, which as often as not had no connection with either the backdrop or the play, set parallel with it. Lighting was of the most primitive sort, candles or oil lamps being notoriously difficult to control. Costumes were chosen with a kind of studied insouciance, Cleopatra and Queen Elizabeth both appearing in the same outfit, a modish Georgian dinner gown, and Macbeth meeting the frilled and furbelowed witches in a full suit of British regimentals.

Perhaps the first of the producers to notice that the stage was antiquated and outmoded was William Charles Macready, the Victorian tragedian. During his years of apprenticeship in the London theatre he observed that of all the arts and sciences, the art of the stage alone seemed to stand still in a rapidly advancing world. In 1837 he became manager of London's national theatre, Covent Garden, and there proceeded to institute a series of reforms which colored the future history of the drama. "Fidelity of illustration" was his watchword; every aspect of a production should contribute to the effect of the whole. If the dramatist was holding the mirror up to nature, then it was the business of the producer to see that the finished unit should be recognizably natural, that setting, costuming, lighting, even acting should be conceived in the spirit of the text.

Macready's example was seized upon by later producers as an excuse to drown the general stage with plush, to overdo the spectacular aspects of a production until the play itself was quite lost, and *Punch* spoke derisively of the Decorated Drama and the Art of Bric-a-Brac. Elsewhere, however, and quite independently, other theatrical experiments were being carried on which had a marked influence on the modern drama.

The most famous of these was the theatre set up by the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen in his little German state. The Duke was an amateur but accomplished painter and a lover of the drama. He undertook personally to design every detail of the productions of his little theatre; not merely the costumes and the settings, but the properties *and the action* were designed according to an over-all concept of the meaning of the play. Like Macready, he realized that the whole performance is the sum of its parts. Further, he was determined that the stage setting should be more than a background to the play: it should be shaped around the action of the play and provide an atmospheric envelope for the performance. Thus a production by the Meiningen players acquired a unity which Macready could not attain in the English theatre; it was an organic and dynamic whole.

One did not have to be a wealthy amateur to make one's mark on the New Theatre Movement. Quite the contrary. André Antoine was an im-

poverished clerk in the Paris Gas Works with the single-minded indefatigability which is the birthright of the stage-struck. He had also (which is not always the characteristic of the stage-struck) talent and intelligence. A voracious reader, he also haunted museums and galleries until he was forcefully struck with the discrepancy between the artificiality and pseudo reality of the theatre, and the naturalism of the novelists and the impressionism of the painters. "The serious theater [should be] the living image of life," Antoine declared, dedicating himself and his movement to realism. With industry, diplomacy, and daring, he took over a group of amateur actors, got up a bill of revolutionary one-act plays, and named his venture the Théâtre Libre. In nearly every respect, in its repertory, its subscription audience, its constant battle with the censors, and its equally constant threat of financial disaster, the Théâtre Libre was the model for its offshoots in other countries.

The Théâtre Libre began in the spring of 1887. Three years later, under the leadership of Otto Brahm, the Berlin Freie Bühne was organized, presenting as its opening play Ibsen's *Ghosts*, also to be one of Antoine's triumphs. Indeed the history of the Free Theatre movement could almost be traced by listing the performances of *Ghosts* across the European continent. The Germans went a step beyond Antoine in 1890 with the establishment of the Freie Volksbühne, "a social-democratic organization," as its prospectus announced, "bringing before its audience plays which offer a social criticism of life."

In 1891, thanks to a young Dutch critic, J. T. Grein, the modern drama arrived in England. His Independent Theatre opened, of course, with a production of *Ghosts*, the shock of which produced reams of largely unfavorable publicity, and won the immediate support of Bernard Shaw. Out of it grew such well-remembered producing groups as the Stage Society, the Barker-Vedrenne management at the Court Theatre, and the various ventures encouraged by Miss A. E. F. Horniman in Manchester and Dublin.

The New Theatre reached Russia in 1898 with the establishment of the world-famous Moscow Art Theatre. Its two directors, Konstantin Stanislavsky, an amateur artist, and V. Nemirovich-Danchenko, a professional manager, developed a theory of staging which was the ultimate in realism: the cast of *The Lower Depths*, for instance, was sent off to live among the thieves and beggars of the story. "The Stanislavsky method" of training actors has become a byword in the profession; it involves the creation of a character in every detail and the complete abandonment of the traditional conventions of acting. The same painstaking care was expended on the staging. For the production of the historical drama, *Tsar Feodor*, genuine antiques were assembled from all over the country. Nothing, they declared, was too precious to be lavished upon "the creative life of the theater."

In America, the beginnings of the New Theatre were tentative and long delayed. The Washington Square Players, a group of Greenwich Village artists, and the Provincetown Players, members of a summer colony on Cape Cod, began almost simultaneously about 1916 to experiment with one-act plays written by their fellows. If, by that late date, their ventures into realism

could hardly be other than conventional, the spirit that moved them was still revolutionary—and amateur, as compared with the wholly commercial milieu of the professional theatre. A sentence or two from one of their ambitious apologies for their life could very well apply to the “Free Theatre” in any country:

Primitive drama, the expression of the communal or religious life of the organic human group, the tribe, had spontaneously the unity of a pure art. There may be 200 actors dramatically dancing the conflict of Winter and Spring, but all that all of them do in that drama springs from one shared fund of feelings, ideas, impulses. Unity is not imposed on them by the will of one of their number, but comes from that deep level in the spirit of each where all their spirits are one. The aim of the founders of the Provincetown Players is to make all hands work from that level and to do it by recreating in a group of modern individuals, individuals far more highly differentiated than primitive people, a kindredness of minds, a spiritual unity resembling the primitive unity of the tribe, a unity which may spontaneously create the unity necessary to the art of the theatre.

The constant repetition of the word “unity” is not casual. Unity is the key to the art of the modern theatre, first heard in Macready’s incumbency at Covent Garden, insisted upon by the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen, and practiced by Antoine and Stanislavsky and the Provincetown. It is a reminder that, however possible it may be to consider a play of Shakespeare or Racine as a dramatic poem, the modern drama is only in part a literary art and must be considered constantly in terms of its realization on the stage—not as a printed text but as a produced play.

B. The Reform in Playwrighting

THE WELL-MADE PLAY

Analogies are, like generalizations, frequently so pat as to be suspect, but one can hardly avoid pointing out that the immediate effect of the mechanization of early nineteenth-century society was the mechanization of the drama. The machine age produced the machine-made play. Invented in the early years of the century by an industrious French hack writer, Eugène Scribe, developed by him and his successor, Viktorien Sardou, the *pièce bien-fait* or well-made play superseded the older, “romantic” form and became the dramatic vehicle for realism and the problem play. Economy and precision were the watchwords of the new industrialists, and economy and precision are the watchwords of the well-made playwright. His story is told without waste motion, without subsidiary or parallel incidents. Nothing in the play distracts attention from the main action; everything must contribute directly to it. The dramatist began at the end of his story, with its climax, very much as the writer of detective fiction must, and worked backwards, planting the clues and complications which would “lead” inevitably to the denouement. The result was a highly ingenious machine, and it is frequently a pleasure to watch the apparently unrelated wheels suddenly mesh together to produce some startling effect. But, although the dramatist was careful to write in prose

and to surround his characters with the trappings of everyday existence, the well-made play could hardly be called a picture of life. To revert to the analogy, it was a machine that worked smoothly but produced nothing.

Various playwrights tinkered with the form of the well-made play in an attempt to put it to use, to give it significance. One of the earliest of these was Alexandre Dumas fils, celebrated author of *La Dame aux Camélias*. He was perhaps the first to insist that the playwright must be a thinker as well as an entertainer, that the drama should serve a social purpose. His innovation was to organize his plays around an idea, a thesis, and to see to it that the action of the play justified the thesis he was supporting. For all his good intentions, M. Dumas was perhaps too close to M. Scribe. The thesis that he set out to prove invariably turns out to be an antiquated platitude with little relation to the actual thought and beliefs of his period. It remained for Henrik Ibsen to adapt the form of the well-made play to the actual problems of his age.

The plays of Ibsen's realistic period, beginning with *The Pillars of Society*, are the finest examples of the genuine usefulness of the machine. The precision and economy of these plays are very nearly unmatched: each character is directly concerned with the central situation; every scene, every speech, develops the situation toward its inevitable climax. And the subject of the play is always one which grows directly out of the basic conflicts of a civilization in the process of reorientation. Only careful analysis will reveal the art of the playwright: Ibsen is here the complete realist, drawing his materials and characters and settings from commonplace life but, like the realist in general, selecting his details and points of emphasis to give a shaping, a significance to human experience. (See the analysis of *Rosmersholm*, p. xv.) And once Ibsen, with consummate mastery, had shown the way, other and lesser men were able to produce an endless series of well-made, realistic problem plays, represented in the present volume by such works as *Light-o'-Love*, *La Malquerida*, *John Ferguson*, and *The Silver Cord*.

The well-made play also contributed a sense of form to the playwrights who wished to follow the creed of naturalism as defined by Émile Zola. Beginning with the principle that every individual is the product of his heredity and environment, the naturalists determined to represent life as it is—ostensibly without shaping or direction or selection on the part of the artist. Analysis of *Comrades*, or *The Lower Depths*, or *The Cherry Orchard*, or such later plays as *The Rats* and *The Plough and the Stars* will show that selection and emphasis have inevitably taken place, however, and that this selection and arrangement provide the drama with a core of meaning, a theme of universal implication.

THE REVOLT AGAINST THE WELL-MADE PLAY

The well-made play is thus the basic form of the modern drama from the earliest ventures of Ibsen to the latest season on Broadway. But it is characteristic of the artist to be discontented with the machine, however proficient, however perfect. Even Ibsen, who did so much to make the form productive, tired of its very perfection and found himself seeking new methods to express,

not the social problems of his day, but the deeper, psychological conflicts within the individual. In his final group of plays, climaxed by *John Gabriel Borkman*, he turns to symbolism, to the methods of poetry, to communicate to his audience his vision of man in the universe, rather than, as before, limiting himself to man in society.

If the history of Ibsen's dramatic career is in a sense a forecast of the history of modern drama, from the perfection of the form of the well-made play to the revolt against it, the development of his use of dramatic symbols is equally instructive. The well-made play, in its purest state ("Sardoodledom," as Shaw called it), made great use of inanimate actors—letters, handkerchiefs, glasses of water, poisonous powders—to keep the plot in motion. In his first attempt Ibsen makes typical use of these convenient props. As he refined the vehicle and put it to real work, he discovered a means to make the inanimate actor (without which he could not do) a part of both the action and the theme, the basic idea, of the play. As a simple example, Hedda Gabler shoots herself with a pistol which had been bequeathed her by her father. But she had earlier in the play pointed out that the pistol was all that remained to her from her former way of life, of the meaningless, baseless society in which she had moved. This concrete object is thus a symbol of the intangible and impalpable milieu which shaped her, and her suicide becomes, not only tragic and ironic, but a pointed comment on that society.

In Ibsen's later plays, the symbols occupy an increasingly prominent position, becoming almost mystic in *Borkman* and *When We Dead Awaken*. Although these have never been among his most popular or successful plays on the stage, the symbolic technique employed in them has had a wide influence on the later drama. Maurice Maeterlinck, the Belgian poet and mystic, has devoted himself almost completely to the symbolic play on romantic themes, producing in *Pelléas and Mélisande* a subtle and poetic tragedy incapable of statement in any other terms than its own, with a theme that must be "felt along the heart." The romantic symbolism of Maeterlinck has its analogue in the realistic symbolism of such a dramatist as Tchekhov. The Cherry Orchard, in the play of that name, is no mere ornament but vitally connected with the action and with the characters and with the theme. It is both a fact, an object, and an interpretation of the fact.

A further development of the dramatic use of symbols is to be found in the play form inadequately labeled "expressionism." In this complete and final revolt against realism every character, every object in the play is a symbol of some social or psychological phenomenon, and the meaning of the whole must be sought in an analysis of these symbols. The form traces its origin to the later works of August Strindberg, an indefatigable experimenter. Although he is here represented by his naturalistic *Comrades*, it is possible that Strindberg's greatest and most influential achievement is in his expressionistic *Dream Play* and *Spook Sonata*. These are both, however, highly personal works, depending for their interpretation upon an intimate knowledge of the author's life and character. It has seemed better to illustrate the form with the more "public" performances of *Gas* and *The Great God Brown*. Expressionism is a

difficult and, for the most part, unpopular form and is rarely seen in its pure state outside of little and experimental theatres. It has, however, provided additional tools for the commercial dramatist, as the dream sequences in musical comedies and the movies are constantly reminding us. More than this, of course, it has widened the range of the drama, opened up new subject matter, and provided a method for treating the completely intangible states of the soul and the mind.

The devices of expressionism have also been of greatest assistance to the new school of poetic dramatists. They can be found in T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*, in Auden's *Ascent of F 6*, in Cocteau's *Infernal Machine* and Giraudoux's brilliant *The Trojan War Will Not Take Place*. Indeed, the combination of the form of the well-made play with the devices of expressionism has resulted in some of the outstanding productions of the contemporary theatre, from the discussion plays of Bernard Shaw to the folk tragedies of Garcia Lorca.

The modern drama is an art of variety, richness, and complexity. Based on problems and conflicts that transcend the boundaries of race and state, on conflicts that have grown out of too rapidly acquired knowledge of powers hitherto unrevealed, modern drama—like the serious drama of any period—has undertaken to give us an understanding of our world, a consciousness of our vulnerability, and perhaps a conscience about our new-found strength.

To the Student

ON READING PLAYS

Reading a play, particularly a modern play, can be a simple and enjoyable experience. The primary purpose of the dramatist is to give pleasure, and it is undeniable that such plays as *Command Decision*, *The Plough and the Stars*, and *The Silver Cord* do yield some portion of the pleasure even to the reader which they give more generously to the spectator. But these are, on the surface at least, fairly direct plays. A large part of the repertory of the modern drama, and an important part, is made up of plays whose surface meaning is not apparent and whose construction is anything but simple. Yet unless we are to confine ourselves to the relatively limited ideas and subject matter of the realistic play, the more complex forms must be studied. Careful analysis of the play will give, not merely an understanding of dramatic form, but a richer and more pleasurable experience from the work itself.

1. VISUALIZE THE ACTION. Any of the plays in the present collection will yield to analysis if the student (and his teacher) will constantly bear in mind that he is dealing with a play and not prose fiction. That is, what is here set down in print is only a portion of the finished work of art. The General Introduction has attempted to show how interdependent are the arts of the producer and the dramatist in the modern theatre. An awareness of this interdependence is important to the sensitive reader: he must visualize the stage, visualize the actors moving on it. As an aid to visualization a number of

photographs of actual productions of the plays are included in this volume. The lengthy stage directions of the plays, a device which first began to appear in the nineteenth century, are, of course, a further aid to visualization. They should be read with care, and every detail noted for the enlightenment it can give.

Consider the opening stage directions of *Rosmersholm*:

"Sitting room at Rosmersholm; spacious, old-fashioned, and comfortable. [Does not the word old-fashioned establish both the description of the room and something about the people who live in it? It is to become weighted with meaning as the play proceeds.] In front, on the right, a stove decked with fresh birch-branches and wild flowers. . . . To the left, a window, and before it a stand with flowers and plants. [These same flowers and plants become significant early in the play in the discussion of the dead wife.] On the walls, old and more recent portraits of clergymen, officers, and government officials in uniform. [We know at once what kind of family we are dealing with, a family with traditions and a tendency to conservatism and respectability in its choice of professions.]"

The next direction concerns the leading lady. Rebecca West sits *by the window, crocheting a large shawl which is nearly finished*. The audience responds unconsciously to this picture; the reader must realize it for himself. The crocheting of a large shawl is work for an old woman, or for a young woman who has little to do but watch and wait and ponder. Rebecca West is a young woman.

These two directions, then, have given us not merely information but an attitude, a feeling, about both the setting and the character. The same may be said of the smaller directions scattered through the play to describe the manner in which the lines are to be spoken, or the action which accompanies them. To consider an early passage:

Madam Helseth. . . . No wonder the Pastor thinks twice about setting foot on that bridge. A place where a thing like that has happened—

Rebecca [folding up her work]. They cling to their dead here at Rosmersholm.

The action is as casual as the speech is at once resigned and indulgent. But the tension increases at once, with the housekeeper's reply:

Madam Helseth. Now I would say, Miss, that it's the dead that clings to Rosmersholm.

Rebecca [looks at her]. The dead? . . . What makes you fancy that?

The reader must see the change both in Rebecca's actions and in her mood as Madam Helseth quite unintentionally makes a point. It is the first hint of her connection with the death of Beata, the gradual revelation of which occupies the major portion of the play. It is with an echo of this remark that the play ends, commenting ironically on the old housekeeper's shrewdness and the rightness of Rebecca's fleeting gesture of apprehension.

2. ANALYZE THE STRUCTURE. The reader should also study a play with an awareness that it is a unit composed of lesser units, like a man or a building or

a poem. As a man is built cell by cell, or a building brick by brick, or a poem stanza by stanza, so a play is built scene by scene and act by act, though the scene divisions may be very skillfully disguised. In the old Continental tradition, a new scene¹ began, and was so marked, whenever a new character came on stage. Something of that tradition survives in the structure of many modern plays. The first act of *Rosmersholm*, for instance, is made up of eight scenes.

1. Rebecca and Madam Helseth
2. Rebecca and Kroll
3. Rebecca, Kroll, and Rosmer
4. Rebecca, Kroll, Rosmer, and Brendel
5. Kroll and Rosmer
6. Rebecca, Kroll, and Rosmer
7. Rebecca and Rosmer
8. Rebecca and Madam Helseth

This does not mean that the action has been divided up into eight parts but—which is a very different matter indeed—that eight scenes have been welded together to form the larger action. Even a glance at the listing will show that there is a pattern of movement, coming to a climax in Scene 5 and completing a kind of full circle at Scene 8.

But a closer analysis of each scene's contents will show that there is more than a casual relationship between the subdivisions of the act. The structural pattern, that is, is paralleled by the development of the idea and the subject matter of the play.

The first scene, between Rebecca and the housekeeper, should normally consist of *exposition*, should establish the locale and the situation out of which the subsequent action of the play will develop. As we have already seen, the setting and the behavior of Rebecca do hint at both of these matters. But, and this of utmost importance in capturing the interest of the audience, the brief scene also *advances the action* by establishing certain facts and raising certain questions to which we will want to know the answers. (Human curiosity is the dramatist's most valuable tool.) In this scene we share the interest of the two ladies in the arrival of Rosmer and the Schoolmaster, and we register the carefully pointed fact that there is a foot-bridge over the mill-race outside the window, and that there is a popular legend, about White Horses, connected with the mansion. This leads directly to the second scene, the entrance of Rector Kroll. As an old friend who has been long absent, he naturally may be brought up to date on recent events, and we have no feeling of artifice as bits of the past are revealed to us. The *exposition* in this scene is largely concerned with tantalizing fragments of information about Beata, and Rebecca's youth. The *action* advances as Kroll's character is revealed in his reactions to his family life and political ideas, and in Kroll's suggestion of marriage as a solution to Rebecca's indefinite plans for her future.

¹ It is of course necessary to distinguish between the word "scene" used for the setting and "scene" as a subdivision of the plot.

We are now prepared for the entrance of Rosmer, which begins the third scene. The *exposition* here, skillfully mortised into the action, reveals Rosmer's attitude toward Rebecca and her treatment of his dead wife, and suggests something of his nature as he acknowledges Kroll's guidance of his career. Kroll informs him of the revolt which has occurred in his schoolroom and in his family circle because of the evil influence of Mortensgård and his *Beacon* newspaper. There is also some discussion of the past of Ulric Brendel to prepare us for his scene. But each of these past events assists in propelling the action, in moving the play forward. Suspense is generated as Rosmer announces almost at once that he has many things to talk over with his former mentor, as Rebecca urges him to "do it now!" Kroll is determined to fight the Radical element in his community, and he has established a newspaper of which he expects Rosmer to become editor. Rosmer is about to explain why he cannot—when Ulric Brendel appears.

Scene 4, which belongs to Ulric Brendel, is a kind of catalyst in the action of the first act. Brendel is a serio-comic portrait of the idealist about to enter the struggles of the material world. But grotesque though he may be, his appearance in Rosmersholm is what encourages Johannes to carry through with the great revelation which forms the center of the climactic scene of the act. This is always the function of character, and characterization, in the drama; characters do not exist in these tightly made plays for themselves alone. Each character impinges directly upon the action and contributes to the revelation of the theme, just as Brendel contrasts with Rosmer and Kroll (thus revealing something more of their natures) and by his example forces Rosmer's hand. In Scene 5, Rosmer and Kroll are, unobtrusively, left alone, and in the long dialogue which follows, the past and the present—the *exposition* and the *action*—are wedded as Rosmer explains the change that has come over his thinking and the impossibility of his casting his lot with Kroll's Conservatives. He declares his purpose to ennoble mankind by freeing their minds and purifying their wills. Kroll is determined to win him back when Rebecca's entrance begins a new, brief scene.

In Scene 6, a chance remark of Rosmer's arouses in Kroll's mind the recollection of some words Beata had spoken before her death—suggesting a connection between the suicide, Rebecca, and Rosmer's new Radical ideas. But Kroll dismisses it as unworthy of him and leaves abruptly. In Scene 7, Rebecca discovers that Rosmer is calm after his confession to Kroll, but the final scene looks forward again, with her allusion to the White Horse, and Madam Helseth's curtain line.

The same kind of analysis may be applied to the remaining acts. It will reveal that Ibsen's technique is to weave the exposition about past events through the play, so that, although only a few hours may transpire in the action, many years of the characters' lives are actually involved. But the exposition is so handled that the revelation of the past comes at a critical moment in the action (as in Rebecca's confession), when the accumulating consequences of the past are made clear. The play thus acquires a double plane of action, so to speak, and probes more deeply into the nature and mystery of man.

3. INVESTIGATE THE DRAMATIC SYMBOLS OR IMAGES. It is apparent, too, that *Rosmersholm* is full of symbols. Some discussion of Ibsen's use of this device has been included in the General Introduction. Here it may be sufficient to point to the already mentioned symbolic significance of the setting, with its family portraits, and to call attention to the development of the legend of the White Horse. Madam Helseth introduces it as a kind of folk story, the familiar family ha'nt that appears when there is to be a death in the house. The housekeeper is rather proud of the family ghost, but to Rebecca it becomes an emblem merely. After Kroll and Rosmer have split over the issue of conservatism and radicalism, she says, as Kroll leaves, "Let us hope he mayn't meet with the White Horse. I'm afraid we shall be hearing from the bogies now." When Madam Helseth asks if she thinks someone is going to die, Rebecca replies, "No; why should I think so? But there are so many sorts of white horses in the world." She refers to them again when Rosmer declares his conviction that no cause triumphs that has its origin in sin. "Oh, these are only ancestral doubts—ancestral fears—ancestral scruples. They say the dead come back to Rosmersholm in the shape of rushing white horses. I think this shows that it is true." Ibsen presents a double symbol, then, of the obstacle to the free development of Rebecca and Rosmer—the solid, oak-panneled house, and the mystic folk image of the White Horse, the dead hand of the past forcing conformity upon the present. At the end of the play, Rosmer himself admits that "we of this house" can never escape "from the white horse."

4. ABSTRACT THE THEME. It is true of the drama in general, and of modern drama in most especial particular, that no element of the whole, however small, is unimportant. Since it is an art in which concentration and compression are of the utmost importance, the drama has neither time nor space for extraneous matter, for objects, characters, or situations unconnected with the central action or idea. This will be apparent at once to the reader of *Rosmersholm*, where the technique of realistic play construction is exemplified at its most perfect. But concentration on a single theme is also the core of the freer form of the non-realistic drama (*Gas*, *The Great God Brown*, *The Ascent of F 6*); every detail, however disparate, can be brought to bear upon the central idea.

The discovery of this theme, or unifying idea, is the penultimate purpose of play analysis. And it should be pointed out at once that the theme is not the "moral" of the play; a major play is too serious a work of art to have a moral in the Aesopian sense. As Ibsen said, it was the artist's business to ask questions, not to answer them. The theme of the play is, rather, the author's vision of the world, his "interpretation of experience," and the major play is inevitably one which adds something to our understanding of human nature in general. The theme, then, is not the plot of the play, not the *particular* action, but the *general* human experience to which it may be related.

The *plot* of *Rosmersholm* is the series of events leading up to the double suicide of Rebecca and Johannes. That is our immediate concern in the theatre, or in a first reading of the play. But in a rereading we will begin to notice the symbols, and the significant lines: the stolid room with its stuffy portraits will become linked with Rebecca's statement that the Rosmer view

of life ennobles, but kills happiness; the constantly enlarging symbol of the White Horse will impress upon us that this is but a particular example of human experience. The *theme* of *Rosmersholm* thus becomes the tragedy of the idealist who is incapable of compromise and so meets inevitable defeat. And the steps by which we arrive at this statement can be as accurately charted as the Lincoln Highway.

5. SYNTHESIZE. One final thing remains to do. When the analysis has been completed, when the structure, the characters, the symbols, the theme have been examined and their relationships understood, the play should be re-read in the light of this new comprehension. Read aloud, in a group, with each "actor" attempting to convey as much as possible of his understanding of the characters *in their relation to the whole play*, *Rosmersholm* or nearly any other of the plays here included will come alive much as it comes alive in the theatre under the guidance of a skilled director. Analysis is but dissection, which is a kind of murder. Synthesis is a kind of resurrection. It is in this synthesis, following upon the understanding gained from analysis, that the reader approaches the fullest experience of a work of art.

A Note to the Teacher

Mr. Tucker, the original editor of this collection, wrote in his Introduction: "Probably no one will be altogether satisfied with the choice of plays in this volume. No doubt, the ideal selection would be twenty-five plays by the twenty-five greatest dramatists of the contemporary theatre, each represented by his best (and most typical) play." The difficulties in the way of such an arrangement, as Mr. Tucker pointed out, lay in the limitations of copyright and the fallibility of individual judgment.

The passing of nearly two decades, while increasing the candidates for inclusion, has not eliminated the difficulties. Eliot, Lorca, and Giraudoux were unavailable. Mr. Shaw, certainly the major figure of the British theatre, is still adamant against becoming a part of a school text, although inexpensive reprints of many of his plays are fortunately available. And, particularly at the present moment in history, one has constantly to question one's enthusiasms and pray for judgments which will not be based primarily on the playwright's good intentions.

This revision has been undertaken with the aim of making available to students a representative selection from the repertory of modern drama. Certain of the plays in the original edition have been dropped, either because they have lost their vitality with the passing years or because more important examples of the form or content have emerged. It is the conviction of the revising editor that, of the plays here presented, nearly all of those before 1920 may safely be considered what used to be called the "standard drama." Those written after 1920 are less certain to become standard; they do, however, represent the breadth of subject matter and the variety of form and treatment which have made the modern drama so lively a mirror of the contemporary world.

The arrangement of the plays in chronological order arises from the necessity of arranging them in some sort of order, not because the chronological is superior to any other. Indeed, in a study of the modern drama it is very nearly meaningless. The arrangement might as well have been in terms of form—the well-made play and the anti-well-made play; or in terms of style—realism, naturalism, symbolism, expressionism; or in terms of subject matter—social, economic, political, psychological problems; or indeed in terms of national origin. These are simply a few of the possible approaches to a study of dramatic literature. The analysis of *Rosmersholm* provided for the student may suggest the preference of the present editor, but he is not so foolhardy as to suggest that it is the only, or even the best, approach.

A. S. D.

Postscript for the Third Edition

The revisions now made in the text were undertaken to include a poetic drama by T. S. Eliot and the two outstanding American plays produced since the end of World War II. To my fellow teachers of dramatic literature who have suggested these changes and made other helpful comments on the book, my sincere thanks. There can be no question that, of all the poets who have attempted the theatre in our time, Mr. Eliot deserves inclusion in an anthology designed to illustrate the range and achievements of modern dramatic art. He has been, in a sense, the mentor of all the others, and he alone has continued to dedicate his talents to the theatre. Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller, in the two plays here reprinted, brought a new distinction and excitement to the American stage. The emergence of these two playwrights at a time when the theatre was assailed from without by economic devils and grown thin from anemic playwriting is another example of a recurrent phenomenon: the "fabulous invalid," the theatre which has been dying for two thousand years, renewing itself.

A. S. D.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A genuine recognition of the loving and painstaking labor that went into the original compilation of this volume can be arrived at only after an attempt at revising a small portion of it. The soundness of Mr. Tucker's selections and of his introductions to the individual plays is demonstrated by the fact that over two-thirds of the plays were retained and only minor changes, mainly in chronology, were demanded in the introductions. For these changes, for the general introduction, and for the selection and editorial matter of the eight new plays, the revising editor is solely responsible.

Acknowledgment for the use of copyright material is made elsewhere; here a general acknowledgment must be made to Arthur Mizener, of Carleton College, for kindly criticism; and to my wife, for the willing suspension of happier occupations for the drudgery of scissors and paste.

The continuously frustrating business of assembling the illustrations was considerably eased by many people connected with the theater and with various theater collections. Individual acknowledgment of the source is given in the caption of each picture, but special thanks for aid to an editor in distress must be made to Jane Cowl, Walter Hampden, Marguerite McAneny of the Princeton University Library, Elizabeth P. Barrett and the staff of the Theater Collection of the New York Public Library, Lennox Robinson of the Abbey Theater, the staff of the Theater Guild, René Thomas of the Théâtre Louis Jouvet, Florence Vandamm, Dr. William Van Lennep of the Harvard Theater Collection, and Hope T. White.

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ROSMERSHOLM

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

By HENRIK IBSEN

Translated from the Norwegian by

WILLIAM ARCHER

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translated by William Archer, copyright, 1907, by Charles
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HENRIK IBSEN

HENRIK IBSEN, the father of the modern drama, was born in Skien, a country village in Norway, in 1828. After a youth of great poverty, he made various attempts to become a druggist, a landscape painter, and a college graduate. In all of these he was unsuccessful, only an occasional romantic poem bringing him any attention from his friends or the public at large. His poetic gift, however, led to his introduction to Ole Bull, the celebrated violinist, who had established a national theatre in Bergen and who immediately hired the inexperienced young poet as stage manager and director. From that year, 1851, until his death in 1906, Ibsen's life was almost entirely devoted to the theatre, first as producer and later as playwright. Indeed, it might be said that, once he withdrew from actual management in 1862, he had no biography but only a bibliography. Once established as a playwright, he did not haunt lecture platforms or salons, he seldom appeared in the public prints or involved himself in scandals or literary disputes—he wrote plays.

This absorption in his art was made possible in part by a pension granted him by the Norwegian government which permitted him to live inexpensively abroad. Most of his writing was done in Italy and Germany—this distance from the home country, while it did not interfere with his disenchantment, enabling him to take the larger view of his subject matter. A discussion of his technique and an analysis of the present play may be found in the General Introduction.

Rosmersholm, written in 1886, was first produced in Bergen in 1887 and later in the same year in Berlin. Its first appearance in English was in London, 1891, with F. R. Benson and Florence Farr. It has since formed a staple in the repertoire of many well-known actresses from the Italian Eleanora Duse to the American Eva Le Gallienne.

CHARACTERS

JOHANNES ROSMER, *of Rosmersholm, formerly clergyman of the parish*

REBECCA WEST, *in charge of Rosmer's household*

RECTOR * KROLL, *Rosmer's brother-in-law*

ULRIC BRENDEL

PETER MORTENSGÅRD †

MADAM HELSETH, *housekeeper at Rosmersholm*

The action takes place at Rosmersholm, an old family seat near a small coast town in the west of Norway

* "Rector" in the Scotch Continental sense of headmaster of a school, not in the English sense of a beneficed clergyman.

† Pronounce *Mortensgore*.

ROSMERSHOLM

ACT ONE

Sitting-room at Rosmersholm; spacious, old-fashioned, and comfortable. In front, on the right, a stove decked with fresh birch-branches and wild flowers. Farther back, on the same side, a door. In the back wall, folding-doors opening into the hall. To the left, a window, and before it a stand with flowers and plants. Beside the stove a table with a sofa and easy chairs. On the walls, old and more recent portraits of clergymen, officers and government officials in uniform. The window is open; so are the door into the hall and the house door beyond. Outside can be seen an avenue of fine old trees, leading up to the house. It is a summer evening, after sunset.

REBECCA WEST is sitting in an easy-chair by the window, and crocheting a large white woollen shawl, which is nearly finished. She now and then looks out expectantly through the leaves of the plants. MADAM HELSETH presently enters from the right.

Madam Helseth. I suppose I had better begin to lay the table, Miss?

Rebecca West. Yes, please do. The Pastor must soon be in now.

Madam Helseth. Don't you feel the draught, Miss, where you're sitting?

Rebecca. Yes, there is a little draught. Perhaps you had better shut the window.

[MADAM HELSETH shuts the door into the hall and then comes to the window]

Madam Helseth [about to shut the window, looks out]. Why, isn't that the Pastor over there?

Rebecca [hastily]. Where? [Rises] Yes, it is he. [Behind the curtain] Stand aside—don't let him see us.

Madam Helseth [keeping back from the window]. Only think, Miss—he's beginning to take the path by the mill again.

Rebecca. He went that way the day before yesterday, too. [Peeps out between the curtains and the window-frame] But let us see whether—

Madam Helseth. Will he venture across the foot-bridge?

Rebecca. That is what I want to see. [After a pause] No, he is turning. He is going by the upper road again. [Leaves the window] A long way round.

Madam Helseth. Dear Lord, yes. No wonder the Pastor thinks twice about setting foot on that bridge. A place where a thing like that has happened—

Rebecca [folding up her work]. They cling to their dead here at Rosmersholm.

Madam Helseth. Now I would say, Miss, that it's the dead that clings to Rosmersholm.

Rebecca [looks at her]. The dead?

Madam Helseth. Yes, it's almost as if they couldn't tear themselves away from the folk that are left.

Rebecca. What makes you fancy that?

Madam Helseth. Well, if it wasn't for that, there would be no White Horse, I suppose.

Rebecca. Now what is all this about the White Horse, Madam Helseth?

Madam Helseth. Oh, I don't like to talk about it. And, besides, you don't believe in such things.

Rebecca. Do you believe in it, then?

Madam Helseth [goes and shuts the window]. Oh, you'd only be for laughing at me, Miss. [Looks out] Why, isn't that Mr. Rosmer on the mill-path again—?

Rebecca [looks out]. That man there? [Goes to the window] No, that's the Rector!

Madam Helseth. Yes, so it is.

Rebecca. This is delightful. You may be sure he's coming here.

Madam Helseth. He goes straight over the foot-bridge, he does. And yet she was his sister, his own flesh and blood. Well, I'll go and lay the table then, Miss West.

[She goes out to the right. REBECCA stands at the window for a short time; then smiles and nods to some one outside. It begins to grow dark]

Rebecca [goes to the door on the right]. Oh, Madam Helseth, you might let us have some little extra dish for supper. You know what the Rector likes best.

Madam Helseth [outside]. Oh, yes, Miss, I'll see to it.

Rebecca [*opens the door to the hall*]. At last—! How glad I am to see you, my dear Rector.

Rector Kroll [*in the hall, laying down his stick*]. Thanks. Then I am not disturbing you?

Rebecca. You? How can you ask?

Kroll [*comes in*]. Amiable as ever. [*Looks round*] Is Rosmer upstairs in his room?

Rebecca. No, he is out walking. He has stayed out rather longer than usual; but he is sure to be in directly. [*Motioning him to sit on the sofa*] Won't you sit down till he comes?

Kroll [*laying down his hat*]. Many thanks. [*Sits down and looks about him*] Why, how you have brightened up the old room! Flowers everywhere!

Rebecca. Mr. Rosmer is so fond of having fresh, growing flowers about him.

Kroll. And you are too, are you not?

Rebecca. Yes; they have a delightfully soothing effect on me. We had to do without them, though, till lately.

Kroll [*nods sadly*]. Yes, their scent was too much for poor Beata.

Rebecca. Their colours, too. They quite bewildered her—

Kroll. I remember, I remember. [*In a lighter tone*] Well, how are things going out here?

Rebecca. Oh, everything is going its quiet, jog-trot way. One day is just like another.—And with you? Your wife—?

Kroll. Ah, my dear Miss West, don't let us talk about my affairs. There is always something or other amiss in a family; especially in times like these.

Rebecca [*after a pause, sitting down in an easy-chair beside the sofa*]. How is it you haven't once been near us during the whole of the holidays?

Kroll. Oh, it doesn't do to make oneself a nuisance—

Rebecca. If you knew how we have missed you—

Kroll. And then I have been away—

Rebecca. Yes, for the last week or two. We have heard of you at political meetings.

Kroll [*nods*]. Yes what do you say to that? Did you think I would turn political agitator in my old age, eh?

Rebecca [*smiling*]. Well, you have always been a bit of an agitator, Rector Kroll.

Kroll. Why, yes, just for my private

amusement. But henceforth it is to be no laughing matter, I can tell you.—Do you ever see those radical newspapers?

Rebecca. Well yes, my dear Rector, I can't deny that—

Kroll. My dear Miss West, I have nothing to say against it—nothing in your case.

Rebecca. No, surely not. One likes to know what's going on—to keep up with the time—

Kroll. And of course I should not think of expecting you, as a woman, to side actively with either party in the civil contest—I might almost say the civil war—that is raging among us.—But you have seen then, I suppose, how these gentlemen of "the people" have been pleased to treat me? What infamous abuse they have had the audacity to heap on me?

Rebecca. Yes; but it seems to me you gave as good as you got.

Kroll. So I did, though I say it that shouldn't. For now I have tasted blood; and they shall soon find to their cost that I am not the man to turn the other cheek—
[*Breaks off*] But come come—don't let us get upon that subject this evening—it's too painful and irritating.

Rebecca. Oh no, don't let us talk of it.

Kroll. Tell me now—how do you get on at Rosmersholm, now that you are alone? Since our poor Beata—

Rebecca. Thank you, I get on very well. Of course one feels a great blank in many ways—a great sorrow and longing. But otherwise—

Kroll. And do you think of remaining here?—permanently, I mean.

Rebecca. My dear Rector, I really haven't thought about it, one way or the other. I have got so used to the place now, that I feel almost as if I belonged to it.

Kroll. Why, of course you belong to it.

Rebecca. And so long as Mr. Rosmer finds that I am of any use or comfort to him—why, so long, I suppose, I shall stay here.

Kroll [*looks at her with emotion*]. Do you know,—it is really fine for a woman to sacrifice her whole youth to others as you have done.

Rebecca. Oh, what else should I have had to live for?

Kroll. First, there was your untiring devotion to your paralytic and exacting foster-father—

Rebecca. You mustn't suppose that Dr. West was such a charge when we were up in Finmark. It was those terrible boat-voyages up there that broke him down. But after we came here—well, yes, the two years before he found rest were certainly hard enough.

Kroll. And the years that followed—were they not even harder for you?

Rebecca. Oh, how can you say such a thing? When I was so fond of Beata—and when she, poor dear, stood so sadly in need of care and forbearance.

Kroll. How good it is of you to think of her with so much kindness!

Rebecca [*moves a little nearer*]. My dear Rector, you say that with such a ring of sincerity that I cannot think there is any ill-feeling lurking in the background.

Kroll. Ill-feeling? Why, what do you mean?

Rebecca. Well, it would be only natural if you felt it painful to see a stranger managing the household here at Rosmersholm.

Kroll. Why, how on earth—!

Rebecca. But you have no such feeling? [*Takes his hand*] Thanks, my dear Rector; thank you again and again.

Kroll. How on earth did you get such an idea into your head?

Rebecca. I began to be a little afraid when your visits became so rare.

Kroll. Then you have been on a totally wrong scent, Miss West. Besides—after all, there has been no essential change. Even while poor Beata was alive—in her last unhappy days—it was you, and you alone, that managed everything.

Rebecca. That was only a sort of regency in Beata's name.

Kroll. Be that as it may—. Do you know, Miss West—for my part, I should have no objection whatever if you—. But I suppose I mustn't say such a thing.

Rebecca. What must you not say?

Kroll. If matters were to shape so that you took the empty place—

Rebecca. I have the only place I want, Rector.

Kroll. In fact, yes; but not in—

Rebecca [*interrupting gravely*]. For shame, Rector Kroll. How can you joke about such things?

Kroll. Oh, well, our good Johannes Rosmer very likely thinks he has had more

than enough of married life already. But nevertheless—

Rebecca. You are really too absurd, Rector.

Kroll. Nevertheless—. Tell me, Miss West—if you will forgive the question—what is your age?

Rebecca. I'm sorry to say I am over nine-and-twenty, Rector; I am in my thirtieth year.

Kroll. Indeed. And Rosmer—how old is he? Let me see: he is five years younger than I am, so that makes him well over forty-three. I think it would be most suitable.

Rebecca [*ris*es]. Of course, of course; most suitable.—Will you stay to supper this evening?

Kroll. Yes, many thanks; I thought of staying. There is a matter I want to discuss with our good friend.—And I suppose, Miss West, in case you should take fancies into your head again, I had better come out pretty often for the future—as I used to in the old days.

Rebecca. Oh, yes, do—do. [*Shakes both his hands*] Many thanks—how kind and good you are!

Kroll [*gruffly*]. Am I? Well, that's not what they tell me at home.

[*JOHANNES ROSMER enters by the door on the right*]

Rebecca. Mr. Rosmer, do you see who is here?

Johannes Rosmer. Madam Helseth told me. [*Rector Kroll has risen*]

Rosmer [*gently and softly, pressing his hands*]. Welcome back to this house, my dear Kroll. [*Lays his hands on Kroll's shoulders and looks into his eyes*] My dear old friend! I knew that sooner or later things would come all right between us.

Kroll. Why, my dear fellow—do you mean to say you too have been so foolish as to fancy there was anything wrong?

Rebecca [*to ROSMER*]. Yes, only think,—it was nothing but fancy after all!

Rosmer. Is that really the case, Kroll? Then why did you desert us so entirely?

Kroll [*gravely, in a low voice*]. Because my presence would always have been reminding you of the years of your happiness, and of—the life that ended in the mill-race.

Rosmer. Well, it was a kind thought—you were always considerate. But it was quite unnecessary to remain away on that

account.—Come, sit here on the sofa. [*They sit down*] No, I assure you, the thought of Beata has no pain for me. We speak of her every day. We feel almost as if she were still one of the household.

Kroll. Do you really?

Rebecca [*lighting the lamp*]. Yes, indeed we do.

Rosmer. It is quite natural. We were both so deeply attached to her. And both Rebec—both Miss West and I know that we did all that was possible for her in her affliction. We have nothing to reproach ourselves with.—So I feel nothing but a tranquil tenderness now at the thought of Beata.

Kroll. You dear, good people! Henceforward, I declare I shall come out and see you every day.

Rebecca [*seats herself in an armchair*]. Mind, we shall expect you to keep your word.

Rosmer [*with some hesitation*]. My dear Kroll—I wish very much that our intercourse had never been interrupted. Ever since we have known each other, you have seemed predestined to be my adviser—ever since I went to the University.

Kroll. Yes, and I have always been proud of the office. But is there anything particular just now—?

Rosmer. There are many things that I would give a great deal to talk over with you, quite frankly—straight from the heart.

Rebecca. Ah yes, Mr. Rosmer—that must be such a comfort—between old friends—

Kroll. Oh I can tell you I have still more to talk to you about. I suppose you know I have turned a militant politician?

Rosmer. Yes, so you have. How did that come about?

Kroll. I was forced into it in spite of myself. It is impossible to stand idly looking on any longer. Now that the Radicals have unhappily come into power, it is high time something should be done,—so I have got our little group of friends in the town to close up their ranks. I tell you it is high time!

Rebecca [*with a faint smile*]. Don't you think it may even be a little late?

Kroll. Unquestionably it would have been better if we had checked the stream at an earlier point in its course. But who could foresee what was going to happen? Certainly not I. [*Rises and walks up and*

down] But now I have had my eyes opened once for all; for now the spirit of revolt has crept into the school itself.

Rosmer. Into the school? Surely not into your school?

Kroll. I tell you it has—into my own school. What do you think? It has come to my knowledge that the sixth-form boys—a number of them at any rate—have been keeping up a secret society for over six months; and they take in Mortensgård's paper!

Rebecca. The "Beacon"?

Kroll. Yes; nice mental sustenance for future government officials, is it not? But the worst of it is that it's all the cleverest boys in the form that have banded together in this conspiracy against me. Only the dunces at the bottom of the class have kept out of it.

Rebecca. Do you take this so very much to heart, Rector?

Kroll. Do I take it to heart! To be so thwarted and opposed in the work of my whole life! [*Lower*] But I could almost say I don't care about the school—for there is worse behind. [*Looks around*] I suppose no one can hear us?

Rebecca. Oh, no, of course not.

Kroll. Well, then, I must tell you that dissension and revolt have crept into my own house—into my own quiet home. They have destroyed the peace of my family life.

Rosmer [*rises*]. What! Into your own house—?

Rebecca [*goes over to the Rector*]. My dear Rector, what has happened?

Kroll. Would you believe that my own children— In short, it is Laurits that is the ringleader of the school conspiracy; and Hilda has embroidered a red portfolio to keep the "Beacon" in.

Rosmer. I should certainly never have dreamt that, in your own house—

Kroll. No, who would have dreamt of such a thing? In my house, the very home of obedience and order—where one will, and one only, has always prevailed—

Rebecca. How does your wife take all this?

Kroll. Why, that is the most incredible part of it. My wife, who all her life long has shared my opinions and concurred in my views, both in great things and small—she is actually inclined to side with the chil-

dren on many points. And she blames me for what has happened. She says I tyrannise over the children. As if it weren't necessary to——. Well, you see how my house is divided against itself. But of course I say as little about it as possible. Such things are best kept quiet. [*Wanders up the room*] Ah, well, well, well.

[*Stands at the window with his hands behind his back and looks out*]

Rebecca [*comes up close to ROSMER and says rapidly and in a low voice, so that the Rector does not hear her*]. Do it now!

Rosmer [*also in a low voice*]. Not this evening.

Rebecca [*as before*]. Yes, just this evening.

[*Goes to the table and busies herself with the lamp.*]

Kroll [*comes forward*]. Well, my dear Rosmer, now you know how the spirit of the age has overshadowed both my domestic and my official life. And am I to refrain from combating this pernicious, subversive, anarchic spirit, with any weapons I can lay my hands on? Fight it I will, trust me for that; both with tongue and pen.

Rosmer. Have you any hope of stemming the tide in that way?

Kroll. At any rate, I shall have done my duty as a citizen in defence of the State. And I hold it the duty of every right-minded man with an atom of patriotism to do likewise. In fact—that was my principal reason for coming out here this evening.

Rosmer. Why, my dear Kroll, what do you mean——? What can I——?

Kroll. You can stand by your old friends. Do as we do. Lend a hand, with all your might.

Rebecca. But, Rector Kroll, you know Mr. Rosmer's distaste for public life.

Kroll. He must get over his distaste.—You don't keep abreast of things, Rosmer. You bury yourself alive here, with your historical collections. Far be it from me to speak disrespectfully of family trees, and so forth; but, unfortunately, this is no time for hobbies of that sort. You cannot imagine the state things are in, all over the country. There is hardly a single accepted idea that hasn't been turned topsy-turvy. It will be a gigantic task to get all the errors rooted out again.

Rosmer. I have no doubt of it. But I am the last man to undertake such a task.

Rebecca. And besides, I think Mr. Rosmer has come to take a wider view of life than he used to.

Kroll [*with surprise*]. Wider?

Rebecca. Yes; or freer, if you like—less one-sided.

Kroll. What is the meaning of this? Rosmer—surely you are not so weak as to be influenced by the accident that the leaders of the mob have won a temporary advantage?

Rosmer. My dear Kroll, you know how little I understand of politics. But I confess it seems to me that within the last few years people are beginning to show greater independence of thought.

Kroll. Indeed! And you take it for granted that that must be an improvement! But in any case you are quite mistaken, my friend. Just inquire a little into the opinions that are current among the Radicals, both out here and in the town. They are neither more nor less than the wisdom that's retailed in the "Beacon."

Rebecca. Yes; Mortensgård has great influence over many people hereabouts.

Kroll. Yes, just think of it! A man of his foul antecedents—a creature that was turned out of his place as a schoolmaster on account on his immoral life! A fellow like that sets himself up as a leader of the people! And succeeds too! Actually succeeds! I hear he is going to enlarge his paper. I know on good authority that he is on the lookout for a capable assistant.

Rebecca. I wonder that you and your friends don't set up an opposition to him.

Kroll. That is the very thing we are going to do. We have to-day bought the "County News"; there was no difficulty about the money question. But—— [*Turns to ROSMER*] Now I come to my real errand. The difficulty lies in the conduct of the paper—the editing—— Tell me, Rosmer,—don't you feel it your duty to undertake it, for the sake of the good cause?

Rosmer [*almost in consternation*]. I?

Rebecca. Oh, how can you think of such a thing?

Kroll. I can quite understand your horror of public meetings, and your reluctance to expose yourself to their tender mercies. But an editor's work is less conspicuous, or rather——

Rosmer. No, no, my dear friend, you must not ask me to do this.

Kroll. I should be quite willing to try my own hand at that style of work too; but I couldn't possibly manage it. I have such a multitude of irons in the fire already. But for you, with no profession to tie you down — Of course the rest of us would give you as much help as we could.

Rosmer. I cannot, Kroll. I am not fitted for it.

Kroll. Not fitted? You said the same thing when your father preferred you to the living here—

Rosmer. And I was right. That was why I resigned it.

Kroll. Oh, if only you are as good an editor as you were a clergyman, we shall not complain.

Rosmer. My dear Kroll—I tell you once for all—I cannot do it.

Kroll. Well, at any rate, you will lend us your name.

Rosmer. My name?

Kroll. Yes, the mere name, Johannes Rosmer, will be a great thing for the paper. We others are looked upon as confirmed partisans—indeed I hear I am denounced as a desperate fanatic—so that if we work the paper in our own names, we can't reckon upon its making much way among the misguided masses. You, on the contrary, have always kept out of the fight. Everybody knows and values your humanity and uprightness—your delicacy of mind—your unimpeachable honour. And then the prestige of your former position as a clergyman still clings to you; and, to crown all, you have your grand old family name!

Rosmer. Oh, my name—

Kroll [points to the portraits]. Rosmers of Rosmersholm—clergymen and soldiers; government officials of high place and trust; gentlemen to the finger-tips, every man of them—a family that for nearly two centuries has held its place as the first in the district. [Lays his hand on ROSMER'S shoulder] Rosmer—you owe it to yourself and to the traditions of your race to take your share in guarding all that has hitherto been held sacred in our society. [Turns round] What do you say, Miss West?

Rebecca [laughing softly, as if to herself]. My dear Rector—I can't tell you how ludicrous all this seems to me.

Kroll. What do you say? Ludicrous?

Rebecca. Yes, ludicrous. For you must let me tell you frankly—

Rosmer [quickly]. No, no—be quiet! Not just now!

Kroll [looks from one to the other]. My dear friends, what on earth—? [Interrupting himself] H'm.

[MADAM HELSETH appears in the doorway on the right]

Madam Helseth. There's a man out in the kitchen passage that says he wants to see the Pastor.

Rosmer [relieved]. Ah, very well. Ask him to come in.

Madam Helseth. Into the sitting-room?

Rosmer. Yes, of course.

Madam Helseth. But he looks scarcely the sort of man to bring into the sitting-room.

Rebecca. Why, what does he look like, Madam Helseth?

Madam Helseth. Well, he's not much to look at, Miss, and that's a fact.

Rosmer. Did he not give his name?

Madam Helseth. Yes—I think he said his name was Hekman or something of the sort.

Rosmer. I know nobody of that name.

Madam Helseth. And then he said he was called Uldric, too.

Rosmer [in surprise]. Ulric Hetman! Was that it?

Madam Helseth. Yes, so it was—Hetman.

Kroll. I've surely heard that name before—

Rebecca. Wasn't that the name he used to write under—that strange being—

Rosmer [to Kroll]. It is Ulric Brendel's pseudonym.

Kroll. That black sheep Ulric Brendel's—of course it is.

Rebecca. Then he is still alive.

Rosmer. I heard he had joined a company of strolling players.

Kroll. When last I heard of him, he was in the House of Correction.

Rosmer. Ask him to come in, Madam Helseth.

Madam Helseth. Oh, very well.

[She goes out]

Kroll. Are you really going to let a man like that into your house?

Rosmer. You know he was once my tutor.

Kroll. Yes, I know he went and crammed your head full of revolutionary ideas, until your father showed him the door—with his horsewhip.

Rosmer [*with a touch of bitterness*]. Father was a martinet at home as well as in his regiment.

Kroll. Thank him in his grave for that, my dear Rosmer.—Well!

[MADAM HELSETH opens the door on the right for ULRIC BRENDL and then withdraws, shutting the door behind him. He is a handsome man, with grey hair and beard; somewhat gaunt, but active and well set up. He is dressed like a common tramp; thread-bare frock-coat; worn-out shoes; no shirt visible. He wears an old pair of black gloves, and carries a soft, greasy felt hat under his arm, and a walking-stick in his hand]

Ulric Brendel [*Hesitates at first, then goes quickly up to the Rector, and holds out his hand*]. Good evening, Johannes!

Kroll. Excuse me—

Brendel. Did you expect to see me again? And within these hated walls, too?

Kroll. Excuse me— [Pointing] There—

Brendel [*turns*]. Right. There he is. Johannes—my boy—my best-beloved—!

Rosmer [*takes his hand*]. My old teacher. Brendel. Notwithstanding certain painful memories, I could not pass by Rosmersholm without paying you a flying visit.

Rosmer. You are heartily welcome here now. Be sure of that.

Brendel. Ah, this charming lady—? [*Bows*] Mrs. Rosmer, of course.

Rosmer. Miss West.

Brendel. A near relation, no doubt. And yonder unknown—? A brother of the cloth, I see.

Rosmer. Rector Kroll.

Brendel. Kroll? Kroll? Wait a bit?—Weren't you a student of philology in your young days?

Kroll. Of course I was.

Brendel. Why *Donnerwetter*, then I knew you!

Kroll. Pardon me—

Brendel. Weren't you—

Kroll. Pardon me—

Brendel. —one of those myrmidons of morality that got me turned out of the Debating Club?

Kroll. Very likely. But I disclaim any closer acquaintanceship.

Brendel. Well, well! *Nach Belieben*, Herr Doctor. It's all one to me. Ulric

Brendel remains the man he is for all that.

Rebecca. You are on your way into town, Mr. Brendel?

Brendel. You have hit it, gracious lady. At certain intervals, I am constrained to strike a blow for existence. It goes against the grain; but—*enfin*—imperious necessity—

Rosmer. Oh, but, my dear Mr. Brendel, you must allow me to help you. In one way or another, I am sure—

Brendel. Ha, such a proposal to me! Would you desecrate the bond that unites us? Never, Johannes, never!

Rosmer. But what do you think of doing in town? Believe me, you won't find it easy to—

Brendel. Leave that to me, my boy. The die is cast. Simple as I stand here before you, I am engaged in a comprehensive campaign—more comprehensive than all my previous excursions put together. [*To Rector Kroll*] Dare I ask the Herr Professor—*unter uns*—have you a tolerably decent, reputable, and commodious Public Hall in your estimable city?

Kroll. The hall of the Workmen's Society is the largest.

Brendel. And has the Herr Professor any official influence in this doubtless most beneficent Society?

Kroll. I have nothing to do with it.

Rebecca [*to BRENDL*]. You should apply to Peter Mortensgård.

Brendel. Pardon, madame—what sort of an idiot is he?

Rosmer. What makes you take him for an idiot?

Brendel. Can't I tell at once by the name that it belongs to a plebeian?

Kroll. I did not expect that answer.

Brendel. But I will conquer my reluctance. There is no alternative. When a man stands—as I do—at a turning-point in his career—. It is settled. I will approach this individual—will open personal negotiations—

Rosmer. Are you really and seriously standing at a turning-point?

Brendel. Surely my own boy knows that, stand he where he may, Ulric Brendel always stands really and seriously.—Yes, Johannes, I am going to put on a new man—to throw off the modest reserve I have hitherto maintained—

Rosmer. How—?

Brendel. I am about to take hold of life with a strong hand; to step forth; to assert myself. We live in a tempestuous, an equinoctial age.—I am about to lay my mite on the altar of Emancipation.

Kroll. You, too?

Brendel [*to them all*]. Is the local public at all familiar with my occasional writings?

Kroll. No, I must candidly confess that—

Rebecca. I have read several of them. My adopted father had them in his library.

Brendel. Fair lady, then you have wasted your time. For, let me tell you, they are so much rubbish.

Rebecca. Indeed!

Brendel. What you have read, yes. My really important works no man or woman knows. No one—except myself.

Rebecca. How does that happen?

Brendel. Because they are not written.

Rosmer. But, my dear Mr. Brendel—

Brendel. You know, my Johannes, that I am a bit of a Sybarite—a *Feinschmecker*. I have been so all my days. I like to take my pleasures in solitude; for then I enjoy them doubly—tenfold. So, you see when golden dreams descended and enwrapped me—when new, dizzy, far-reaching thoughts were born in me and wafted me aloft on their sustaining pinions—I bodied them forth in poems, visions, pictures—in the rough, as it were, you understand.

Rosmer. Yes, yes.

Brendel. Oh, what pleasures, what intoxications I have enjoyed in my time! The mysterious bliss of creation—in the rough, as I said—applause, gratitude, renown, the wreath of bays—all these I have garnered with full hands quivering with joy. I have sated myself, in my secret thoughts, with a rapture—oh! so intense, so incbrating—!

Kroll. H'm.

Rosmer. But you have written nothing down?

Brendel. Not a word. The soulless toil of the scrivener has always aroused a sickening aversion in me. And besides, why should I profane my own ideals, when I could enjoy them in their purity by myself? But now they shall be offered up. I assure you I feel like a mother who delivers her tender daughters into their bridegrooms' arms. But I will offer them up, nonetheless. I will sacrifice them on the altar of Emanci-

pation. A series of carefully elaborated lectures—over the whole country—!

Rebecca [*with animation*]. This is noble of you, Mr. Brendel! You are yielding up the dearest thing you possess.

Rosmer. The only thing.

Rebecca [*looking significantly at Rosmer*]. How many are there who do as much—who dare do as much?

Rosmer [*returning the look*]. Who knows?

Brendel. My audience is touched. That does my heart good—and steels my will. So now I will proceed to action. Stay—one thing more. [*To the Rector*] Can you tell me, Herr Preceptor,—is there such a thing as a Temperance Society in the town? A Total Abstinence Society? I need scarcely ask.

Kroll. Yes, there is. I am the president, at your service.

Brendel. I saw it in your face! Well, it is by no means impossible that I may come to you and enrol myself as a member for a week.

Kroll. Excuse me—we don't receive members by the week.

Brendel. *A la bonne heure*, Herr Pedagogue. Ulric Brendel has never forced himself into that sort of Society. [*Turns*] But I must not prolong my stay in this house, so rich in memories. I must get on to the town and select a suitable lodging. I presume there is a decent hotel in the place.

Rebecca. Mayn't I offer you anything before you go?

Brendel. Of what sort, gracious lady?

Rebecca. A cup of tea, or—

Brendel. I thank my bountiful hostess—but I am always loath to trespass on private hospitality. [*Waves his hand*] Farewell, gentlefolks all! [*Goes towards the door, but turns again*] Oh, by the way—Johannes—Pastor Rosmer—for the sake of our ancient friendship, will you do your former teacher a service?

Rosmer. Yes, with all my heart.

Brendel. Good. Then lend me—for a day or two—a starched shirt—with cuffs.

Rosmer. Nothing else?

Brendel. For you see I am travelling on foot—at present. My trunk is being sent after me.

Rosmer. Quite so. But is there nothing else?

Brendel. Well, do you know—perhaps you could spare me an oldish, well-worn summer overcoat.

Rosmer. Yes, yes; certainly I can.

Brendel. And if a respectable pair of boots happened to go along with the coat—

Rosmer. That we can manage, too. As soon as you let us know your address, we will send the things in.

Brendel. Not on any account. Pray do not let me give you any trouble! I will take the bagatelles with me.

Rosmer. As you please. Come upstairs with me then.

Rebecca. Let me go. Madam Helseth and I will see to it.

Brendel. I cannot think of suffering this distinguished lady to—

Rebecca. Oh, nonsense! Come along, Mr. Brendel.

[*She goes out to the right*]

Rosmer [*detaining him*]. Tell me—is there nothing else I can do for you?

Brendel. Upon my word, I know of nothing more. Well, yes, damn it all—now that I think of it—! Johannes, do you happen to have eight crowns in your pocket?

Rosmer. Let me see. [*Opens his purse*] Here are two ten-crown notes.

Brendel. Well, well, never mind! I can take them. I can always get them changed in the town. Thanks in the meantime. Remember it was two tenners you lent me. Good-night my own dear boy. Good-night, respected Sir.

[*Goes out to the right. ROSMER takes leave of him, and shuts the door behind him*]

Kroll. Merciful Heaven—so that is the Ulric Brendel people once expected such great things of.

Rosmer [*quietly*]. At least he has had the courage to live his life his own way. I don't think that is such a small matter either.

Kroll. What? A life like his! I almost believe he has it in him to turn your head afresh.

Rosmer. Oh, no. My mind is quite clear now, upon all points.

Kroll. I wish I could believe it, my dear Rosmer. You are so terribly impressionable.

Rosmer. Let us sit down. I want to talk to you.

Kroll. Yes, let us.

[*They seat themselves on the sofa*]

Rosmer [*after a slight pause*]. Don't you think we lead a pleasant and comfortable life here?

Kroll. Yes, your life is pleasant and comfortable now—and peaceful. You have found yourself a home, Rosmer. And I have lost mine.

Rosmer. My dear friend, don't say that. The wound will heal again in time.

Kroll. Never; never. The barb will always rankle. Things can never be as they were.

Rosmer. Listen to me, Kroll. We have been fast friends for many and many a year. Does it seem to you conceivable that our friendship should ever go to wreck?

Kroll. I know of nothing in the world that could estrange us. What puts that into your head?

Rosmer. You attach such paramount importance to uniformity of opinions and views.

Kroll. No doubt; but we two are in practical agreement, at any rate, on the great essential questions.

Rosmer [*in a low voice*]. No; not now.

Kroll [*tries to spring up*]. What is this?

Rosmer [*holding him*]. No, you must sit still—I entreat you, Kroll.

Kroll. What can this mean? I don't understand you. Speak plainly.

Rosmer. A new summer has blossomed in my soul. I see with eyes grown young again. And so now I stand—

Kroll. Where—where, Rosmer?

Rosmer. Where your children stand.

Kroll. You? You! Impossible! Where do you say you stand?

Rosmer. On the same side as Laurits and Hilda.

Kroll [*bows his head*]. An apostate! Johannes Rosmer an apostate!

Rosmer. I should have felt so happy—so intensely happy, in what you call my apostasy. But, nevertheless, I suffered deeply; for I knew it would be a bitter sorrow to you.

Kroll. Rosmer—Rosmer! I shall never get over this! [*Looks gloomily at him.*] To think that you, too, can find it in your heart to help on the work of corruption and ruin in this unhappy land.

Rosmer. It is the work of emancipation I wish to help on.

Kroll. Oh, yes, I know. That is what both the tempters and their victims call it. But do you think there is any emancipation to be expected from the spirit that is now poisoning our social life?

Rosmer. I am not in love with the spirit that is in the ascendant, nor with either of the contending parties. I will try to bring together men from both sides—as many as I can—and to unite them as closely as possible. I will devote my life and all my energies to this one thing—the creation of a true democracy in this country.

Kroll. So you don't think we have democracy enough already! For my part it seems to me we are all in a fair way to be dragged down into the mire, where hitherto only the mob have been able to thrive.

Rosmer. That is just why I want to awaken the democracy to its true task.

Kroll. What task?

Rosmer. That of making all the people of this country noble—

Kroll. All the people—?

Rosmer. As many as possible, at any rate.

Kroll. By what means?

Rosmer. By freeing their minds and purifying their wills.

Kroll. You are a dreamer, Rosmer. Will you free them? Will you purify them?

Rosmer. No, my dear friend—I will only try to arouse them to their task. They themselves must accomplish it.

Kroll. And you think they can?

Rosmer. Yes.

Kroll. By their own strength?

Rosmer. Yes, precisely by their own strength. There is no other.

Kroll [rises]. Is this becoming language for a priest?

Rosmer. I am no longer a priest.

Kroll. Well but—the faith of your fathers—?

Rosmer. It is mine no more.

Kroll. No more—!

Rosmer [rises]. I have given it up. I had to give it up, Kroll.

Kroll [controlling his agitation]. Oh, indeed— Yes, yes, yes. I suppose one thing goes with another. Was this, then, your reason for leaving the Church?

Rosmer. Yes. As soon as my mind was clear—as soon as I was quite certain that this was no passing attack of scepticism, but

a conviction I neither could nor would shake off—then I at once left the Church.

Kroll. So this has been your state of mind all this time! And we—your friends—have heard nothing of it. Rosmer—Rosmer—how could you hide the miserable truth from us!

Rosmer. Because it seemed to me a matter that concerned myself alone. And besides, I did not wish to give you and my other friends any needless pain. I thought I might live on here, as before, quietly, serenely, happily. I wanted to read, to bury myself in all the studies that until then had been sealed books to me. I wanted to make myself thoroughly at home in the great world of truth and freedom that has been revealed to me.

Kroll. Apostate! Every word proves it. But why, then, do you confess your secret apostasy after all? And why just at this time?

Rosmer. You yourself have driven me to it, Kroll.

Kroll. I? Have I driven you—?

Rosmer. When I heard of your violence on the platform—when I read all the rancorous speeches you made—your bitter onslaughts on your opponents—the contemptuous invectives you heaped on them—oh, Kroll, to think that you—you—could come to this!—then my duty stood imperatively before me. Men are growing evil in this struggle. Peace and joy and mutual forbearance must once more enter into our souls. That is why I now intend to step forward and openly avow myself for what I am. I, too, will try my strength. Could not you—from your side—help me in this, Kroll?

Kroll. Never so long as I live will I make peace with the subversive forces in society.

Rosmer. Then at least let us fight with honourable weapons—since fight we must.

Kroll. Whoever is not with me in the essential things of life, him I no longer know. I owe him no consideration.

Rosmer. Does that apply to me, too?

Kroll. It is you that have broken with me, Rosmer.

Rosmer. Is this a breach then?

Kroll. This! It is a breach with all who have hitherto been your friends. You must take the consequences.

[REBECCA WEST enters from the right, and opens the door wide]

Rebecca. There now; he is on his way to his great sacrifice. And now we can go to supper. Will you come in, Rector?

Kroll [takes up his hat]. Good-night, Miss West. I have nothing more to do here.

Rebecca [eagerly]. What is this? [*Shuts the door and comes forward*] Have you spoken?

Rosmer. He knows everything.

Kroll. We will not let you go, Rosmer. We will force you to come back to us.

Rosmer. I can never stand where I did.

Kroll. We shall see. You are not the man to endure standing alone.

Rosmer. I shall not be so completely alone after all.—There are two of us to bear the loneliness together.

Kroll. Ah—. [*A suspicion appears in his face*] That too! Beata's words—!

Rosmer. Beata's—?

Kroll [shaking off the thought]. No, no—that was vile. Forgive me.

Rosmer. What? What do you mean?

Kroll. Don't ask. Bah! Forgive me! Good-bye!

[*Goes towards the entrance door*]

Rosmer [follows him]. Kroll! Our friendship must not end like this. I will come and see you to-morrow.

Kroll [in the hall, turns]. You shall never cross my threshold again.

[*He takes up his stick and goes out*]

[*ROSMER stands for a moment in the doorway; then shuts the door and walks up to the table*]

Rosmer. It does not matter, Rebecca. We will see it out, we two faithful friends—you¹ and I.

Rebecca. What do you think he meant when he said "That was vile"?

Rosmer. Don't trouble about that, dear. He himself didn't believe what was in his mind. To-morrow I will go and see him. Good-night!

Rebecca. Are you going upstairs so early to-night? After this?

Rosmer. To-night as usual. I feel so relieved, now it is over. You see—I am quite calm, Rebecca. Do you, too, take it calmly. Good-night!

Rebecca. Good-night, dear friend! Sleep well!

[*ROSMER goes out by the hall door; his steps are heard ascending the staircase*]

[*REBECCA goes and pulls a bell-rope near the stove. Shortly after, MADAM HELSETH enters from the right*]

Rebecca. You can take away the supper things, Madam Helseth. Mr. Rosmer doesn't want anything, and the Rector has gone home.

Madam Helseth. Has the Rector gone? What was the matter with him?

Rebecca [takes up her crochet work]. He said he thought there was a heavy storm brewing—

Madam Helseth. What a strange notion! There's not a cloud in the sky this evening.

Rebecca. Let us hope he mayn't meet the White Horse! I'm afraid we shall soon be hearing something from the bogies now.

Madam Helseth. Lord forgive you, Miss! Don't say such awful things.

Rebecca. Well, well, well—

Madam Helseth [softly]. Do you really think some one is to go soon, Miss?

Rebecca. No; why should I think so? But there are so many sorts of white horses in this world, Madam Helseth.—Well, good-night. I shall go to my room now.

Madam Helseth. Good-night, Miss.

[*REBECCA goes out to the right, with her crochet work*]

Madam Helseth [turns the lamp down, shaking her head and muttering to herself]. Lord—Lord! That Miss West! The things she does say!

ACT TWO

JOHANNES ROSMER'S study. Entrance door on the left. At the back, a doorway with a curtain drawn aside, leading into ROSMER'S bedroom. On the right a window, and in front of it a writing-table covered with books and papers. Book-shelves and cases round the room. The furniture is simple. On the left, an old-fashioned sofa, with a table in front of it.

JOHANNES ROSMER, in an indoor jacket, is sitting in a high-backed chair at the writing-table. He is cutting and turning over the leaves of a pamphlet, and reading a little here and there.

There is a knock at the door on the left. Rosmer [without moving]. Come in.

¹ From this point, and throughout when alone, Rosmer and Rebecca use the *du* of intimate friendship in speaking of each other.

Rebecca West [enters, dressed in a morning gown]. Good morning.

Rosmer [turning the leaves of the pamphlet]. Good morning, dear. Do you want anything?

Rebecca. I only wanted to hear if you had slept well.

Rosmer. Oh, I have had a beautiful, peaceful night. [Turns] And you?

Rebecca. Oh, yes, thanks—towards morning—

Rosmer. I don't know when I have felt so light-hearted as I do now. I am so glad I managed to speak out at last.

Rebecca. Yes, it is a pity you remained silent so long, Rosmer.

Rosmer. I don't understand myself how I could be such a coward.

Rebecca. It wasn't precisely cowardice—

Rosmer. Oh, yes, dear—when I think the thing out, I can see there was a touch of cowardice at the bottom of it.

Rebecca. All the braver, then, to make the plunge at last. [Sits on a chair at the writing-table, close to him] But now I want to tell you of something I have done—and you mustn't be vexed with me about it.

Rosmer. Vexed? How can you think—?

Rebecca. Well, it was perhaps rather indiscreet of me but—

Rosmer. Let me hear what it was.

Rebecca. Yesterday evening, when Ulric Brendel was leaving—I gave him a note to Peter Mortensgård.

Rosmer [a little doubtful]. Why, my dear Rebecca— Well, what did you say?

Rebecca. I said that he would be doing you a service if he would look after that unfortunate creature a little, and help him in any way he could.

Rosmer. Dear, you shouldn't have done that. You have only done Brendel harm. And Mortensgård is not a man I care to have anything to do with. You know of that old episode between us.

Rebecca. But don't you think it would be as well to make it up with him again?

Rosmer. I? With Mortensgård? In what way do you mean?

Rebecca. Well, you know you can't feel absolutely secure now—after this breach with your old friends.

Rosmer [looks at her and shakes his

head]. Can you really believe that Kroll or any of the others would try to take revenge on me? That they would be capable of—?

Rebecca. In the first heat of anger, dear—. No one can be sure. I think—after the way the Rector took it—

Rosmer. Oh, you ought surely to know him better than that. Kroll is a gentleman, to the backbone. I am going into town this afternoon to talk to him. I will talk to them all. Oh, you shall see how easily it will all go—

[MADAM HELSETH appears at the door on the left]

Rebecca [rises]. What is it, Madam Helseth?

Madam Helseth. Rector Kroll is downstairs in the hall.

Rosmer [rises hastily]. Kroll!

Rebecca. The Rector! Is it possible—

Madam Helseth. He wants to know if he may come upstairs, Mr. Rosmer.

Rosmer [to REBECCA]. What did I tell you?—Of course he may. [Goes to the door and calls down the stairs] Come up, dear friend! I am delighted to see you.

[ROSMER stands holding the door open.

MADAM HELSETH goes out. REBECCA draws the curtain before the doorway at the back and then begins arranging things in the room]

[RECTOR KROLL enters, with his hat in his hand]

Rosmer [with quiet emotion]. I knew it couldn't be the last time—

Kroll. I see things to-day in quite a different light from yesterday.

Rosmer. Ah, yes, Kroll; I was sure you would, now that you have had time to reflect.

Kroll. You misunderstand me completely. [Lays his hat on the table beside the sofa] It is of the utmost importance that I should speak to you, alone.

Rosmer. Why may not Miss West—?

Rebecca. No, no, Mr. Rosmer. I will go.

Kroll [looks at her from head to foot]. And I must ask Miss West to excuse my coming at such an untimely hour—taking her unawares before she has had time to—

Rebecca [surprised]. What do you mean? Do you see any harm in my wearing a morning gown about the house?

Kroll. Heaven forbid! I know nothing

of what may now be customary at Rosmersholm.

Rosmer. Why, Kroll—you are not yourself to-day!

Rebecca. Allow me to wish you good morning, Rector Kroll.

[*She goes out to the left*]

Kroll. By your leave—

[*Sits on the sofa*]

Rosmer. Yes, Kroll, sit down, and let us talk things out amicably.

[*He seats himself in a chair directly opposite to the Rector*]

Kroll. I haven't closed an eye since yesterday. I have been lying thinking and thinking all night.

Rosmer. And what do you say to things to-day?

Kroll. It will be a long story, Rosmer. Let me begin with a sort of introduction. I can give you news of Ulric Brendel.

Rosmer. Has he called on you?

Kroll. No. He took up his quarters in a low public-house—in the lowest company of course—and drank and stood treat as long as he had any money. Then he began abusing the whole company as a set of disreputable blackguards—and so far he was quite right—whereupon they thrashed him and pitched him out into the gutter.

Rosmer. So he is incorrigible after all.

Kroll. He had pawned the coat, too; but I am told that has been redeemed for him. Can you guess by whom?

Rosmer. Perhaps by you?

Kroll. No; by the distinguished Mr. Mortensgård.

Rosmer. Ah, indeed.

Kroll. I understand that Mr. Brendel's first visit was to the "idiot" and "plebeian."

Rosmer. Well, it was lucky for him—

Kroll. To be sure it was. [*Leans over the table towards ROSMER*] And that brings me to a matter it is my duty to warn you about, for our old—for our former friendship's sake.

Rosmer. My dear Kroll, what can that be?

Kroll. It is this: there are things going on behind your back in this house.

Rosmer. How can you think so? Is it Reb—is it Miss West you are aiming at?

Kroll. Precisely. I can quite understand it on her part. She has so long been accustomed to have everything her own way here. But nevertheless—

Rosmer. My dear Kroll, you are utterly mistaken. She and I—we have no concealments from each other on any subject whatever.

Kroll. Has she told you, then, that she has entered into correspondence with the editor of the "Beacon"?

Rosmer. Oh, you are thinking of the few lines she sent by Ulric Brendel?

Kroll. Then you have found it out. And do you approve of her entering into relations with a scurrilous scribbler, who never lets a week pass without holding me up to ridicule, both as a schoolmaster and as a public man?

Rosmer. My dear Kroll, I don't suppose that side of the matter ever entered her head. And besides, of course she has full liberty of action, just as I have.

Kroll. Indeed? Ah, no doubt that follows from your new line of thought. For Miss West presumably shares your present standpoint?

Rosmer. Yes, she does. We two have worked our way forward in faithful comradeship.

Kroll [*looks at him and slowly shakes his head*]. Oh, you blind, deluded being!

Rosmer. I? Why do you say that?

Kroll. Because I dare not—I will not think the worst. No no, let me say my say out.—You really do value my friendship, Rosmer? And my respect too? Do you not?

Rosmer. I surely need not answer that question.

Kroll. Well, but there are other questions that do require an answer—a full explanation on your part.—Will you submit to a sort of investigation—?

Rosmer. Investigation?

Kroll. Yes; will you let me question you about certain things it may pain you to be reminded of? You see—this apostasy of yours—well, this emancipation, as you call it—is bound up with many other things that for your own sake you must explain to me.

Rosmer. My dear Kroll, ask what questions you please. I have nothing to conceal.

Kroll. Then tell me—what do you think was the real, the ultimate reason why Beata put an end to her life?

Rosmer. Can you have any doubt on the subject? Or, rather, can you ask for

reasons for what an unhappy, irresponsible invalid may do?

Kroll. Are you certain that Beata was completely irresponsible for her actions? The doctors, at any rate, were by no means convinced of it.

Rosmer. If the doctors had ever seen her as I have so often seen her, for days and nights together, they would have had no doubts.

Kroll. I had no doubts either—then.

Rosmer. Oh, no, unhappily, there wasn't the smallest room for doubt. I have told you of her wild frenzies of passion—which she expected me to return. Oh, how they appalled me! And then her causeless, consuming self-reproaches during the last few years.

Kroll. Yes, when she had learnt that she must remain childless all her life.

Rosmer. Yes, just think of that! Such terrible, haunting agony of mind about a thing utterly beyond her control—! How could you call her responsible for her actions?

Kroll. H'm—. Can you remember whether you had any books in the house at that time treating of the rationale of marriage—according to the "advanced" ideas of the day?

Rosmer. I remember Miss West lending me a work of the kind. The Doctor left her his library, you know. But, my dear Kroll, you surely cannot suppose we were so reckless as to let my poor sick wife get hold of any such ideas? I can solemnly assure you that the fault was not ours. It was her own distempered brain that drove her into these wild aberrations.

Kroll. One thing at any rate I can tell you; and that is, that poor, overstrung, tortured Beata put an end to her life in order that you might live happily—live freely, and—after your own heart.

Rosmer [*starts half up from his chair*]. What do you mean by that?

Kroll. Listen to me quietly, Rosmer; for now I can speak of it. In the last year of her life she came to me twice to pour forth all her anguish and despair.

Rosmer. On this same subject?

Kroll. No. The first time she came, it was to declare that you were on the road to perversion—that you were going to break with the faith of your fathers.

Rosmer [*eagerly*]. What you say is im-

possible, Kroll. Absolutely impossible! You must be mistaken.

Kroll. And why?

Rosmer. Because while Beata was alive I was still wrestling with myself in doubt. And that fight I fought out alone and in utter silence. I don't think even Rebecca—

Kroll. Rebecca?

Rosmer. Oh, well—Miss West. I call her Rebecca for convenience' sake.

Kroll. So I have remarked.

Rosmer. So it is inconceivable to me how Beata could have got hold of the idea. And why did she not speak to me about it? She never did—she never said a single word.

Kroll. Poor creature—she begged and implored me to talk to you.

Rosmer. And why did you not?

Kroll. At that time I never for a moment doubted that she was out of her mind. Such an accusation against a man like you!—And then she came again—about a month later. This time she seemed outwardly calmer; but as she was going she said: "They may soon expect the White Horse at Rosmersholm now."

Rosmer. Yes, yes. The White Horse—she often spoke of it.

Kroll. And when I tried to divert her mind from such melancholy fancies, she only answered: "I have not long to live; for Johannes must marry Rebecca at once."

Rosmer [*almost speechless*]. What do you say? I marry—?

Kroll. That was on a Thursday afternoon—. On the Saturday evening she threw herself from the bridge into the mill-race.

Rosmer. And you never warned us—!

Kroll. You know very well how often she used to say that she felt her end was near.

Rosmer. Yes, I know. But nevertheless—you should have warned us!

Kroll. I did think of it; but not till too late.

Rosmer. But afterwards, why did you not—? Why have you said nothing about all this?

Kroll. What good would it have done for me to come torturing and harassing you still further? I took all she said for mere wild, empty ravings—until yesterday evening.

Rosmer. Then you have now changed your opinion?

Kroll. Did not Beata see quite clearly when she declared you were about to desert the faith of your fathers?

Rosmer [looks fixedly, straight before him]. I cannot understand it. It is the most incomprehensible thing in the world.

Kroll. Incomprehensible or not—there it is. And now I ask you, Rosmer,—how much truth is there in her other accusation? The last one, I mean.

Rosmer. Accusation? Was that an accusation?

Kroll. Perhaps you did not notice the way she worded it. She had to go, she said—why?

Rosmer. In order that I might marry Rebecca—

Kroll. These were not precisely her words. Beata used a different expression. She said: "I have not long to live; for Johannes must marry Rebecca at once."

Rosmer [looks at him for a moment; then rises]. Now I understand you, Kroll.

Kroll. And what then? What is your answer?

Rosmer [still quiet and self-restrained]. To such an unheard-of—? The only fitting answer would be to point to the door.

Kroll [rises]. Well and good.

Rosmer [stands in front of him]. Listen to me. For more than a year—ever since Beata left us—Rebecca West and I have lived alone here at Rosmersholm. During all that time you have known of Beata's accusation against us. But I have never for a moment noticed that you disapproved of Rebecca's living in my house.

Kroll. I did not know till yesterday evening that it was an unbelieving man who was living with an—emancipated woman.

Rosmer. Ah—! Then you do not believe that purity of mind is to be found among the unbelieving and the emancipated? You do not believe that morality may be an instinctive law of their nature!

Kroll. I have no great faith in the morality that is not founded on the teachings of the Church.

Rosmer. And you mean this to apply to Rebecca and me? To the relation between us two—?

Kroll. Not even out of consideration for you two can I depart from my opinion that there is no unfathomable gulf between free thought and—h'm—

Rosmer. And what?

Kroll. —and free love,—since you will have it.

Rosmer [in a low voice]. And you are not ashamed to say this to me! You, who have known me from my earliest youth!

Kroll. For that very reason. I know how easily you are influenced by the people you associate with. And this Rebecca of yours—well, Miss West then—we really know little or nothing about her. In short, Rosmer—I will not give you up. And you—you must try to save yourself in time.

Rosmer. Save myself? How—?

[MADAM HELSETH peeps in at the door on the left]

Rosmer. What do you want?

Madam Helseth. I wanted to ask Miss West to step downstairs.

Rosmer. Miss West is not up here.

Madam Helseth. Isn't she? [Looks round the room] Well, that's strange.

[She goes]

Rosmer. You were saying—?

Kroll. Listen to me. I am not going to inquire too closely into the secret history of what went on here in Beata's lifetime—and may still be going on. I know that your marriage was a most unhappy one; and I suppose that must be taken as some sort of excuse—

Rosmer. Oh, how little you really know me—!

Kroll. Don't interrupt me. What I mean is this: if your present mode of life with Miss West is to continue, it is absolutely necessary that the change of views—the unhappy backsliding—brought about by her evil influence, should be hushed up. Let me speak! Let me speak! I say, if the worst comes to the worst, in Heaven's name think and believe whatever you like about everything under the sun. But you must keep your views to yourself. These things are purely personal matters, after all. There is no need to proclaim them from the housetops.

Rosmer. I feel an absolute necessity to get out of a false and equivocal position.

Kroll. But you have a duty towards the traditions of your race, Rosmer! Remember that! Rosmersholm has, so to speak, radiated morality and order from time immemorial—yes and respectful conformity to all that is accepted and sanctioned by the best people. The whole district has taken its stamp from Rosmersholm. It would

lead to deplorable, irremediable confusion if it were known that you had broken with what I may call the hereditary idea of the house of Rosmer.

Rosmer. My dear Kroll, I cannot see the matter in that light. I look upon it as my imperative duty to spread a little light and gladness here, where the Rosmer family has from generation to generation been a centre of darkness and oppression.

Kroll [looks at him severely]. Yes, that would be a worthy life-work for the last of your race! No, Rosmer; let such things alone; you are the last man for such a task. You were born to be a quiet student.

Rosmer. Perhaps so. But for once in a way I mean to bear my part in the battle of life.

Kroll. And do you know what that battle of life will mean for you? It will mean a life-and-death struggle with all your friends.

Rosmer [quietly]. They cannot all be such fanatics as you.

Kroll. You are a credulous creature, Rosmer. An inexperienced creature, too. You have no conception of the overwhelming storm that will burst upon you.

[MADAM HELSETH looks in at the door on the left]

Madam Helseth. Miss West wants to know—

Rosmer. What is it?

Madam Helseth. There's a man downstairs wanting to have a word with the Pastor.

Rosmer. Is it the man who was here yesterday evening?

Madam Helseth. No, it's that Mortensgård.

Rosmer. Mortensgård?

Kroll. Aha! So it has come to this, has it?—Already!

Rosmer. What does he want with me? Why didn't you send him away?

Madam Helseth. Miss West said I was to ask if he might come upstairs.

Rosmer. Tell him I'm engaged—

Kroll [to MADAM HELSETH]. Let him come up, Madam Helseth.

[MADAM HELSETH goes]

Kroll [takes up his hat]. I retire from the field—for the moment. But the main battle has yet to be fought.

Rosmer. On my honour, Kroll—I have nothing whatever to do with Mortensgård.

Kroll. I do not believe you. On no subject and in no relation whatever will I henceforth believe you. It is war to the knife now. We will try whether we cannot disarm you.

Rosmer. Oh, Kroll—how low—how very low you have sunk!

Kroll. I? And you think you have the right to say that to me! Remember Beata!

Rosmer. Still harping upon that?

Kroll. No. You must solve the enigma of the mill-race according to your own conscience—if you have anything of the sort left.

[PETER MORTENSGÅRD enters softly and quietly from the left. He is a small, wiry man with thin reddish hair and beard]

Kroll [with a look of hatred]. Ah, here we have the "Beacon"—burning at Rosmersholm! [Buttons his coat] Well, now I can no longer hesitate what course to steer.

Mortensgård [deferentially]. The "Beacon" may always be relied upon to light the Rector home.

Kroll. Yes; you have long shown your goodwill. To be sure there's a commandment about bearing false witness against your neighbour—

Mortensgård. Rector Kroll need not instruct me in the commandments.

Kroll. Not even in the seventh?

Rosmer. Kroll—!

Mortensgård. If I needed instruction, it would rather be the Pastor's business.

Kroll [with covert sarcasm]. The Pastor's? Oh, yes, unquestionably Pastor Rosmer is the man for that.—Good luck to your conference, gentlemen!

[Goes out and slams the door behind him]

Rosmer [keeps his eyes fixed on the closed door and says to himself]. Well, well—so be it then. [Turns] Will you be good enough to tell me, Mr. Mortensgård, what brings you out here to me?

Mortensgård. It was really Miss West I came to see. I wanted to thank her for the friendly note I received from her yesterday.

Rosmer. I know she wrote to you. Have you seen her then?

Mortensgård. Yes, for a short time. [Smiles slightly] I hear there has been a certain change of views out here at Rosmersholm.

Rosmer. My views are altered in many respects. I might almost say in all.

Mortensgård. So Miss West told me; and that's why she thought I had better come up and talk things over with the Pastor.

Rosmer. What things, Mr. Mortensgård?

Mortensgård. May I announce in the "Beacon" that there has been a change in your views—that you have joined the party of freedom and progress?

Rosmer. Certainly you may. In fact, I beg you to make the announcement.

Mortensgård. Then it shall appear in tomorrow's paper. It will cause a great sensation when it's known that Pastor Rosmer of Rosmersholm is prepared to take up arms for the cause of light, in that sense, too.

Rosmer. I don't quite understand you.

Mortensgård. I mean that the moral position of our party is greatly strengthened whenever we gain an adherent of serious, Christian principles.

Rosmer [*with some surprise*]. Then you do not know—? Did not Miss West tell you that, too?

Mortensgård. What, Pastor Rosmer? Miss West was in a great hurry. She said I was to go upstairs and hear the rest from yourself.

Rosmer. Well, in that case I may tell you that I have emancipated myself entirely, and on every side. I have broken with all the dogmas of the Church. Henceforth they are nothing to me.

Mortensgård [*looks at him in amazement*]. Well—if the skies were to fall I couldn't be more—! Pastor Rosmer himself announces—.

Rosmer. Yes, I now stand where you have stood for many years. That, too, you may announce in the "Beacon" to-morrow.

Mortensgård. That too? No, my dear Pastor—excuse me—I don't think it would be wise to touch on that side of the matter.

Rosmer. Not touch on it?

Mortensgård. Not at present, I mean.

Rosmer. I don't understand—

Mortensgård. Well, you see, Pastor Rosmer—you probably don't know the ins and outs of things so well as I do. But, since you have come over to the party of freedom—and, as I hear from Miss West, you intend to take an active share in the movement—I presume you would like to be of as

much service as possible, both to the cause in general and to this particular agitation.

Rosmer. Yes, that is my earnest wish.

Mortensgård. Good. But now I must tell you, Pastor Rosmer, that if you openly declare your defection from the Church, you tie your own hands at the very outset.

Rosmer. Do you think so?

Mortensgård. Yes, believe me, you won't be able to do much for the cause, in this part of the country at any rate. And besides—we have plenty of free-thinkers already, Pastor Rosmer—I might almost say too many. What the party requires, is a Christian element—something that every one must respect. That is what we are sadly in need of. And, therefore, I advise you to keep your own counsel about what doesn't concern the public. That's my view of the matter, at least.

Rosmer. I understand. Then if I openly confess my apostasy, you dare not have anything to do with me?

Mortensgård [*shaking his head*]. I scarcely like to risk it, Pastor Rosmer. I have made it a rule for some time past not to support any one or anything that is actively opposed to the Church.

Rosmer. Then you have yourself returned to the Church?

Mortensgård. That concerns no one but myself.

Rosmer. Ah, so that is it. Now I understand you.

Mortensgård. Pastor Rosmer—you ought to remember that I—I in particular—have not full liberty of action.

Rosmer. What hampers you?

Mortensgård. The fact that I am a marked man.

Rosmer. Ah—indeed.

Mortensgård. A marked man, Pastor Rosmer. You, above all men, should remember that; for I have chiefly you to thank for the scandal that branded me.

Rosmer. If I had then stood where I stand now, I should have dealt more gently with your offence.

Mortensgård. That I don't doubt. But it is too late now. You have branded me once for all—branded me for life. I suppose you can scarcely understand what that means. But now you may perhaps come to feel the smart of it yourself, Pastor Rosmer.

Rosmer. I?

Mortensgård. Yes. You surely don't

suppose that Rector Kroll and his set will ever forgive a desertion like yours? I hear the "County News" is going to be very savage in future. You, too, may find yourself a marked man before long.

Rosmer. In personal matters, Mr. Mortensgård, I feel myself secure from attack. My life is beyond reproach.

Mortensgård [with a sly smile]. That's a large word, Mr. Rosmer.

Rosmer. Perhaps; but I have a right to use it.

Mortensgård. Even if you were to scrutinise your conduct as closely as you once scrutinised mine?

Rosmer. Your tone is very curious. What are you hinting at? Anything definite?

Mortensgård. Yes, something definite. Only one thing. But that might be bad enough, if malicious opponents got wind of it.

Rosmer. Will you have the kindness to let me hear what it is?

Mortensgård. Cannot you guess for yourself, Pastor?

Rosmer. No, certainly not. I have not the slightest idea.

Mortensgård. Well, well, I suppose I must come out with it then.—I have in my possession a strange letter, dated from Rosmersholm.

Rosmer. Miss West's letter, do you mean? Is it so strange?

Mortensgård. No, there's nothing strange about that. But I once received another letter from this house.

Rosmer. Also from Miss West?

Mortensgård. No, Mr. Rosmer.

Rosmer. Well then, from whom? From whom?

Mortensgård. From the late Mrs. Rosmer.

Rosmer. From my wife! You received a letter from my wife!

Mortensgård. I did.

Rosmer. When?

Mortensgård. Towards the close of Mrs. Rosmer's life. Perhaps about a year and a half ago. That is the letter I call strange.

Rosmer. I suppose you know that my wife's mind was affected at that time.

Mortensgård. Yes; I know many people thought so. But I don't think there was anything in the letter to show it. When I call it strange, I mean in another sense.

Rosmer. And what in the world did my poor wife take it into her head to write to you about?

Mortensgård. I have the letter at home. She begins to the effect that she is living in great anxiety and fear; there are so many malicious people about here, she says; and they think of nothing but causing you trouble and injury.

Rosmer. Me?

Mortensgård. Yes, so she says. And then comes the strangest part of all. Shall I go on, Pastor Rosmer?

Rosmer. Assuredly! Tell me everything, without reserve.

Mortensgård. The deceased lady begs and implores me to be magnanimous. She knows, she says, that it was her husband that had me dismissed from my post as teacher; and she conjured me by all that's sacred not to avenge myself.

Rosmer. How did she suppose you could avenge yourself?

Mortensgård. The letter says that if I should hear rumours of sinful doings at Rosmersholm, I am not to believe them; they are only spread abroad by wicked people who wish to make you unhappy.

Rosmer. Is all that in the letter?

Mortensgård. You may read it for yourself, sir, when you please.

Rosmer. But I don't understand—! What did she imagine the rumour to be about?

Mortensgård. Firstly, that the Pastor had deserted the faith of his fathers. Your wife denied that absolutely—then. And next—h'm—

Rosmer. Next?

Mortensgård. Well, next she writes—rather confusedly—that she knows nothing of any sinful intrigue at Rosmersholm; that she has never been wronged in any way. And if any such rumours should get about, she implores me to say nothing of the matter in the "Beacon."

Rosmer. Is no name mentioned?

Mortensgård. None.

Rosmer. Who brought you the letter?

Mortensgård. I have promised not to say. It was handed to me one evening, at dusk.

Rosmer. If you had made inquiries at the time, you would have learnt that my poor, unhappy wife was not fully accountable for her actions.

Mortensgård. I did make inquiries, Pastor Rosmer. But I must say that was not the impression I received.

Rosmer. Was it not?—But what is your precise reason for telling me now about this incomprehensible old letter?

Mortensgård. To impress on you the necessity for extreme prudence, Pastor Rosmer.

Rosmer. In my life, do you mean?

Mortensgård. Yes. You must remember that from today you have ceased to be a neutral.

Rosmer. Then you have quite made up your mind that I must have something to conceal?

Mortensgård. I don't know why an emancipated man should refrain from living his life out as fully as possible. But, as I said before, be exceedingly cautious in future. If anything should get abroad that conflicts with current prejudices, you may be sure the whole liberal movement will have to suffer for it.—Good-bye, Pastor Rosmer.

Rosmer. Good-bye.

Mortensgård. I shall go straight to the office and have the great news put into the "Beacon."

Rosmer. Yes; omit nothing.

Mortensgård. I shall omit nothing that the public need know.

[*He bows and goes out. ROSMER remains standing in the doorway while he goes down the stairs. The outer door is heard to close*]

Rosmer [*in the doorway, calls softly*]. Rebecca! Re—— H'm. [*Aloud*] Madam Helseth,—is Miss West not there?

Madam Helseth [*from the hall*]. No, Pastor Rosmer, she's not here.

[*The curtain at the back is drawn aside.*]

REBECCA appears in the doorway]

Rebecca. Rosmer!

Rosmer [*turns*]. What! Were you in my room? My dear, what were you doing there?

Rebecca [*goes up to him*]. I was listening.

Rosmer. Oh, Rebecca, how could you?

Rebecca. I could not help it. He said it so hatefully—that about my morning gown——

Rosmer. Then you were there when Kroll——?

Rebecca. Yes. I wanted to know what was lurking in his mind.

Rosmer. I would have told you.

Rebecca. You would scarcely have told me all. And certainly not in his own words.

Rosmer. Did you hear everything, then?

Rebecca. Nearly everything, I think. I had to go downstairs for a moment when Mortensgård came.

Rosmer. And then you came back again——?

Rebecca. Don't be vexed with me, dear friend!

Rosmer. Do whatever you think right. You are mistress of your own actions.—But what do you say to all this, Rebecca——? Oh, I seem never to have needed you so much before!

Rebecca. Both you and I have been prepared for what must happen some time.

Rosmer. No, no—not for this.

Rebecca. Not for this?

Rosmer. I knew well enough that sooner or later our beautiful, pure friendship might be misinterpreted and soiled. Not by Kroll—I could never have believed such a thing of him—but by all those other people with the coarse souls and the ignoble eyes. Oh yes—I had reason enough for keeping our alliance so jealously concealed. It was a dangerous secret.

Rebecca. Oh, why should we care what all those people think! We know in our own hearts that we are blameless.

Rosmer. Blameless? I? Yes, I thought so—till to-day. But now—now, Rebecca——?

Rebecca. Well, what now?

Rosmer. How am I to explain Beata's terrible accusation?

Rebecca [*vehemently*]. Oh, don't speak of Beata! Don't think of Beata any more! You were just beginning to shake off the hold she has upon you, even in the grave.

Rosmer. Since I have heard all this, she seems, in a ghastly sort of way, to be alive again.

Rebecca. Oh no—not that, Rosmer! Not that!

Rosmer. Yes, I tell you. We must try to get to the bottom of this. What can possibly have led her to misinterpret things so fatally?

Rebecca. You are surely not beginning to doubt that she was on the very verge of insanity?

Rosmer. Oh yes—that is just what I

can't feel quite certain of any longer. And besides—even if she was—

Rebecca. If she was? Well, what then?

Rosmer. I mean—where are we to look for the determining cause that drove her morbid spirit over the borderline of madness?

Rebecca. Oh, why brood over problems no one can solve?

Rosmer. I cannot help it, Rebecca. I cannot shake off these gnawing doubts, however much I may wish to.

Rebecca. But it may become dangerous—this eternal dwelling upon one miserable subject.

Rosmer [*walks about restlessly, in thought*]. I must have betrayed myself in one way or another. She must have noticed how happy I began to feel from the time you came to us.

Rebecca. Yes but, dear, even if she did—?

Rosmer. Be sure it didn't escape her that we read the same books—that the interest of discussing all the new ideas drew us together. Yet I cannot understand it! I was so careful to spare her. As I look back, it seems to me I made it the business of my life to keep her in ignorance of all our interests. Did I not, Rebecca?

Rebecca. Yes, yes; certainly you did.

Rosmer. And you, too. And yet—! Oh, it's terrible to think of! She must have gone about here—full of her morbid passion—saying never a word—watching us—noting everything—and misinterpreting everything.

Rebecca [*pressing her hands together*]. Oh, I should never have come to Rosmersholm!

Rosmer. To think of all she must have suffered in silence! All the foulness her sick brain must have conjured up around us! Did she never say anything to you to put you at all on the alert?

Rebecca [*as if startled*]. To me! Do you think I should have stayed a day longer if she had?

Rosmer. No, no, of course not.—Oh, what a battle she must have fought! And alone, too, Rebecca; desperate and quite alone!—and then, at last, that heart-breaking, accusing victory—in the mill-race.

[*Throws himself into the chair by the writing-table, with his elbows on the table and his face in his hands*]

Rebecca [*approaches him cautiously from*

behind]. Listen, Rosmer. If it were in your power to call Beata back—to you—to Rosmersholm—would you do it?

Rosmer. Oh, how do I know what I would or would not do? I can think of nothing but this one thing—that cannot be recalled.

Rebecca. You were just beginning to live, Rosmer. You had begun. You had freed yourself—on every side. You felt so buoyant and happy—

Rosmer. Oh, yes—I did indeed.—And now this crushing blow falls on me.

Rebecca [*behind him, rests her arms on the chair-back*]. How beautiful it was when we sat in the twilight, in the room downstairs, helping each other to lay out our new life-plans! You were to set resolutely to work in the world—the living world of today, as you said. You were to go as a messenger of emancipation from home to home; to win over minds and wills; to create noble-men around you in wider and wider circles. Noble-men.

Rosmer. Happy noble-men.

Rebecca. Yes—happy.

Rosmer. For it is happiness that ennobles, Rebecca.

Rebecca. Should you not say—sorrow as well? A great sorrow?

Rosmer. Yes—if one can get through it—over it—away from it.

Rebecca. That is what you must do.

Rosmer [*shakes his head gloomily*]. I shall never get over this—wholly. There will always be a doubt—a question left. I can never again know that luxury of the soul which makes life so marvellously sweet to live!

Rebecca [*bends over his chair-back, and says more softly*]. What is it you mean, Rosmer?

Rosmer [*looking up at her*]. Peaceful, happy innocence.

Rebecca [*recoils a step*]. Yes. Innocence. [A short pause]

Rosmer [*with his elbow on the table, leaning his head on his hand, and looking straight before him*]. And what extraordinary penetration she showed! How systematically she put all this together! First she begins to doubt my orthodoxy—. How could that occur to her? But it did occur to her; and then it grew to be a certainty. And then—yes, then of course it was easy for her to think all the rest possible. [*Sits*

up in his chair and runs his hands through his hair] Oh, all these horrible imaginings! I shall never get rid of them. I feel it. I know it. At any moment they will come rushing in upon me, and bring back the thought of the dead!

Rebecca. Like the White Horse of Rosmersholm.

Rosmer. Yes, like that. Rushing forth in the darkness—in the silence.

Rebecca. And because of this miserable figment of the brain, you will let slip the hold you were beginning to take upon the living world?

Rosmer. You may well think it hard. Yes, hard, Rebecca. But I have no choice. How could I ever leave this behind me?

Rebecca [*behind his chair*]. By entering into new relations.

Rosmer [*surprised, looks up*]. New relations?

Rebecca. Yes, new relations to the outside world. Live, work, act. Don't sit here brooding and groping among insoluble enigmas.

Rosmer [*rises*]. New relations? [*Walks across the floor, stops at the door and then comes back*]. One question occurs to me. Has it occurred to you too, Rebecca?

Rebecca [*drawing breath with difficulty*]. Let me—hear—what it is.

Rosmer. What form do you think our relations will take after to-day?

Rebecca. I believe our friendship will endure—come what may.

Rosmer. That is not exactly what I meant. The thing that first brought us together, and that unites us so closely—our common faith in a pure comradeship between man and woman—

Rebecca. Yes, yes—what of that?

Rosmer. I mean, that such a relation—as this of ours—does it not presuppose a quiet, happy, peaceful life—?

Rebecca. What then?

Rosmer. But the life I must now look forward to is one of struggle and unrest and strong agitations. For I will live my life, Rebecca! I will not be crushed to earth by horrible possibilities. I will not have my course of life forced upon me, either by the living or by—any one else.

Rebecca. No, no—do not! Be an absolutely free man, Rosmer!

Rosmer. But can you not guess what is in my mind? Do you not know? Don't

you see how I can best shake off all gnawing memories—all the unhappy past?

Rebecca. How?

Rosmer. By opposing to it a new, a living reality.

Rebecca [*feeling for the chair-back*]. A living—What do you mean?

Rosmer [*comes nearer*]. Rebecca—if I were to ask you—will you be my second wife?

Rebecca [*for a moment speechless, then cries out with joy*]. Your wife! Your—I! I!

Rosmer. Come; let us try it. We two will be one. The place of the dead must stand empty no longer.

Rebecca. I—in Beata's place—!

Rosmer. Then she will be out of the saga—completely—for ever and ever.

Rebecca [*softly, trembling*]. Do you believe that, Rosmer?

Rosmer. It must be so! It must! I cannot—I will not go through life with a dead body on my back. Help me to cast it off, Rebecca. And let us stifle all memories in freedom, in joy, in passion. You shall be to me the only wife I have ever had.

Rebecca [*with self-command*]. Never speak of this again. I will never be your wife.

Rosmer. What! Never! Do you not think you could come to love me? Is there not already a strain of love in our friendship?

Rebecca [*puts her hands over her ears as if in terror*]. Don't speak so, Rosmer! Don't say such things!

Rosmer [*seizes her arm*]. Yes, yes—there is a growing promise in our relation. Oh, I can see that you feel it, too. Do you not, Rebecca?

Rebecca [*once more firm and calm*]. Listen to me. I tell you—if you persist in this, I will go away from Rosmersholm.

Rosmer. Go way! You! You cannot. It is impossible.

Rebecca. It is still more impossible that I should be your wife. Never in this world can I marry you.

Rosmer [*looks at her in surprise*]. You say "can"; and you say it so strangely. Why can you not?

Rebecca [*seizes both his hands*]. Dear friend—both for your own sake and for

mine—do not ask why. [*Lets go his hands*]
Do not, Rosmer.

[*Goes towards the door on the left*]

Rosmer. Henceforth I can think of nothing but that one question—why?

Rebecca [*turns and looks at him*]. Then it is all over.

Rosmer. Between you and me?

Rebecca. Yes.

Rosmer. It will never be all over between us two. You will never leave Rosmersholm.

Rebecca [*with her hand on the door-handle*]. No, perhaps I shall not. But if you ask me again—it is all over.

Rosmer. All over? How—?

Rebecca. For then I will go the way that Beata went. Now you know it, Rosmer.

Rosmer. Rebecca—?

Rebecca [*in the doorway, nods slowly*]. Now you know it.

[*She goes out*]

Rosmer [*stares, thunderstruck, at the door, and says to himself*]. What—is—this?

ACT THREE

The sitting-room at Rosmersholm. The window and the entrance door are open. The sun is shining outside. Forenoon.

REBECCA WEST, dressed as in the first Act, stands at the window, watering and arranging the flowers. Her crochet work lies in the armchair. MADAM HELSETH is moving about, dusting the furniture with a feather-brush.

Rebecca [*after a short silence*]. I can't understand the Pastor remaining so long upstairs to-day.

Madam Helseth. Oh, he often does that. But he'll soon be down now, I should think.

Rebecca. Have you seen anything of him?

Madam Helseth. I caught a glimpse of him when I went upstairs with his coffee. He was in his bedroom, dressing.

Rebecca. I asked because he was a little out of sorts yesterday.

Madam Helseth. He didn't look well. I wonder if there isn't something amiss between him and his brother-in-law.

Rebecca. What do you think it can be?

Madam Helseth. I couldn't say. Perhaps it's that Mortensgård that has been setting them against each other.

Rebecca. Likely enough.—Do you know anything of this Peter Mortensgård?

Madam Helseth. No indeed. How could you think so, Miss? A fellow like him?

Rebecca. Do you mean because he edits such a low paper?

Madam Helseth. Oh, it's not only that.—You must have heard, Miss, that he had a child by a married woman that had been deserted by her husband?

Rebecca. Yes, I have heard of it. But it must have been long before I came here.

Madam Helseth. It's true he was very young at the time; and she should have known better. He wanted to marry her, too; but of course he couldn't do that. And I don't say he hasn't paid dear for it.—But, good Lord, Mortensgård has got on in the world since those days. There's a many people run after him now.

Rebecca. Yes, most of the poor people bring their affairs to him when they're in any trouble.

Madam Helseth. Ah, and others, too, perhaps, besides the poor folk—

Rebecca [*looks at her furtively*]. Indeed.

Madam Helseth [*by the sofa, dusting away vigorously*]. Perhaps the last people you would think likely to, Miss.

Rebecca [*busy with the flowers*]. Come, now, that's only an idea of yours, Madam Helseth. You can't be sure of what you're saying.

Madam Helseth. You think I can't, Miss? But I can tell you I am. Why—if you must know it—I once took a letter in to Mortensgård myself.

Rebecca [*turning*]. No—did you?

Madam Helseth. Yes, indeed I did. And a letter that was written here at Rosmersholm, too.

Rebecca. Really, Madam Helseth?

Madam Helseth. Yes, that it was. And it was on fine paper, and there was a fine red seal on it, too.

Rebecca. And it was given to you to deliver? Then, my dear Madam Helseth, it's not difficult to guess who wrote it.

Madam Helseth. Well?

Rebecca. It must have been something that poor Mrs. Rosmer, in her morbid state—

Madam Helseth. It's you that say that, Miss, not me.

Rebecca. But what was in the letter? Oh, I forgot—you can't know that.

Madam Helseth. H'm; what if I did know it, all the same?

Rebecca. Did she tell you what she was writing about?

Madam Helseth. No, she didn't exactly do that. But Mortensgård, when he'd read it, he began questioning me backwards and forwards and up and down, so that I soon guessed what was in it.

Rebecca. Then what do you think it was? Oh my dear good Madam Helseth, do tell me.

Madam Helseth. Oh no, Miss. Not for the whole world.

Rebecca. Oh you can surely tell me. We two are such good friends.

Madam Helseth. Lord preserve me from telling you anything about that, Miss. I can only tell you that it was something horrible that they'd got the poor sick lady to believe.

Rebecca. Who had got her to believe it?

Madam Helseth. Wicked people, Miss West. Wicked people.

Rebecca. Wicked—?

Madam Helseth. Yes, I say it again. They must have been real wicked people.

Rebecca. And who do you think it could have been?

Madam Helseth. Oh, I know well enough what to think. But Lord forbid I should say anything. To be sure there's a certain lady in the town—h'm!

Rebecca. I can see that you mean Mrs. Kroll.

Madam Helseth. Ah, she's a fine one, she is. She has always been the great lady with me. And she's never had any too much love for you neither.

Rebecca. Do you think Mrs. Rosmer was in her right mind when she wrote that letter to Mortensgård?

Madam Helseth. It's a queer thing a person's mind, Miss. Clean out of her mind I don't think she was.

Rebecca. But she seemed to go distracted when she learned that she must always be childless. It was that that unsettled her reason.

Madam Helseth. Yes, poor lady, that was a dreadful blow to her.

Rebecca [*takes up her crochet and sits in a chair by the window*]. But after all—don't you think it was a good thing for the Pastor, Madam Helseth?

Madam Helseth. What, Miss?

Rebecca. That there were no children. Don't you think so?

Madam Helseth. H'm, I'm sure I don't know what to say about that.

Rebecca. Oh yes, believe me, it was fortunate for him. Pastor Rosmer is not the man to have crying children about his house.

Madam Helseth. Ah, Miss, little children don't cry at Rosmersholm.

Rebecca [*looks at her*]. Don't cry?

Madam Helseth. No. As long as people can remember, children have never been known to cry in this house.

Rebecca. That's very strange.

Madam Helseth. Yes; isn't it? But it runs in the family. And then there's another strange thing. When they grow up, they never laugh. Never, as long as they live.

Rebecca. Why, how extraordinary—

Madam Helseth. Have you ever once heard or seen the Pastor laugh, Miss?

Rebecca. No—now that I think of it, I almost believe you are right. But I don't think any one laughs much in this part of the country.

Madam Helseth. No, they don't. They say it began at Rosmersholm. And then I suppose it spread round about, as if it was catching-like.

Rebecca. You are a very wise woman, Madam Helseth.

Madam Helseth. Oh, Miss, you mustn't sit there and make fun of me. [*Listens*] Hush, hush—here's the Pastor coming down. He doesn't like to see dusting going on.

[*She goes out to the right*]

[*JOHANNES ROSMER, with his hat and stick in his hand, enters from the hall*]

Rosmer. Good morning, Rebecca.

Rebecca. Good morning, dear. [*A moment after—crocheting*] Are you going out?

Rosmer. Yes.

Rebecca. It's a beautiful day.

Rosmer. You didn't look in on me this morning.

Rebecca. No, I didn't. Not to-day.

Rosmer. Do you not intend to in future?

Rebecca. Oh, I don't know yet, dear.

Rosmer. Has anything come for me?

Rebecca. The "County News" has come.

Rosmer. The "County News"?

Rebecca. There it is on the table.

Rosmer [*puts down his hat and stick*]. Is there any thing—?

Rebecca. Yes.

Rosmer. And you didn't send it up?

Rebecca. You will read it soon enough.

Rosmer. Oh, indeed? [*Takes the paper and reads, standing by the table*].—What!—"We cannot warn our readers too earnestly against unprincipled renegades." [*Looks at her*] They call me a renegade, Rebecca.

Rebecca. They mention no names.

Rosmer. That makes no difference. [*Reads on*] "Secret traitors to the good cause."—"Judas-natures, who make brazen confession of their apostasy as soon as they think the most convenient and—profitable moment has arrived." "Ruthless befouling of a name honoured through generations"—"in the confident hope of a suitable reward from the party in momentary power." [*Lays down the paper on the table*] And they can say such things of me!—Men who have known me so long and so well! Things they themselves don't believe. Things they know there is not a word of truth in—their print them all the same.

Rebecca. That is not all.

Rosmer [*takes up the paper again*]. "Inexperience and lack of judgment the only excuse"—"pernicious influence—possibly extending to matters which, for the present, we do not wish to make subjects of public discussion or accusation." [*Looks at her*] What is this?

Rebecca. It is aimed at me, plainly enough.

Rosmer [*lays down the paper*]. Rebecca, —this is the conduct of dishonourable men.

Rebecca. Yes, they need scarcely be so contemptuous of Mortensgård.

Rosmer [*walks about the room*]. Something must be done. All that is good in human nature will go to ruin, if this is allowed to go on. But it shall not go on! Oh, what a joy—what a joy it would be to me to let a little light into all this gloom and ugliness!

Rebecca [*rises*]. Ah, yes, Rosmer. In that you have a great and glorious object to live for.

Rosmer. Only think, if I could rouse them to see themselves as they are; teach them to repent and blush before their better natures; bring them together in mutual forbearance—in love, Rebecca!

Rebecca. Yes, put your whole strength into that, and you must succeed.

Rosmer. I think success must be possible. Oh, what a delight it would be then to live one's life! No more malignant wrangling; only emulation. All eyes fixed on the same goal. Every mind, every will pressing forward—upward—each by the path its nature prescribes for it. Happiness for all—through all. [*Happens to look out of the window, starts and says sadly*] Ah! Not through me.

Rebecca. Not—? Not through you?

Rosmer. Nor for me.

Rebecca. Oh Rosmer, do not let such doubts take hold of you.

Rosmer. Happiness—dear Rebecca—happiness is above all things the calm, glad certainty of innocence.

Rebecca [*looks straight before her*]. Yes, innocence—

Rosmer. Oh, you cannot know what guilt means. But I—

Rebecca. You least of all!

Rosmer [*points out of the window*]. The mill-race.

Rebecca. Oh Rosmer—!

[*MADAM HELSETH looks in at the door*]

Madam Helseth. Miss West!

Rebecca. Presently, presently. Not now.

Madam Helseth. Only a word, Miss.

[*REBECCA goes to the door. MADAM*

HELSETH tells her something. They

whisper together for a few moments.

MADAM HELSETH nods and goes out]

Rosmer [*uneasily*]. Was it anything for me?

Rebecca. No, only something about the house-work.—You ought to go out into the fresh air, dear Rosmer. You should take a good long walk.

Rosmer [*takes up his hat*]. Yes, come. Let us go together.

Rebecca. No, dear, I can't just now. You must go alone. But shake off all these gloomy thoughts. Promise me.

Rosmer. I am afraid I shall never shake them off.

Rebecca. Oh, that such baseless fancies should take so strong a hold of you—!

Rosmer. Not so baseless I am afraid, Rebecca. I lay awake all night thinking it over and over. Perhaps Beata saw clearly after all.

Rebecca. In what?

Rosmer. In her belief that I loved you, Rebecca.

Rebecca. Right in that!

Rosmer [*lays his hat down on the table*]. The question that haunts me is this: were we two not deceiving ourselves all the time—when we called our relation friendship?

Rebecca. You mean that it might as well have been called—?

Rosmer.—love. Yes, Rebecca, that is what I mean. Even while Beata was alive, all my thoughts were for you. It was you alone I longed for. It was when you were by my side that I felt the calm gladness of utter content. If you think it over, Rebecca—did we not feel for each other from the first a sort of sweet, secret child-love—desireless, dreamless? Was it not so with you? Tell me.

Rebecca [*struggling with herself*]. Oh—I don't know what to answer.

Rosmer. And it was this close-linked life in and for each other that we took for friendship. No, Rebecca—our bond has been a spiritual marriage—perhaps from the very first. That is why there is guilt on my soul. I had no right to such happiness—it was a sin against Beata.

Rebecca. No right to live happily? Do you believe that, Rosmer?

Rosmer. She looked at our relation with the eyes of her love—judged it after the fashion of her love. Inevitably. Beata could not have judged otherwise than she did.

Rebecca. But how can you accuse yourself because of Beata's delusion?

Rosmer. It was love for me—her kind of love—that drove her into the mill-race. That is an immovable fact, Rebecca. And that is what I can never get over.

Rebecca. Oh, think of nothing but the great, beautiful task you have devoted your life to.

Rosmer [*shakes his head*]. It can never be accomplished, dear. Not by me. Not after what I have come to know.

Rebecca. Why not by you?

Rosmer. Because no cause ever triumphs that has its origin in sin.

Rebecca [*vehemently*]. Oh, these are only ancestral doubts—ancestral fears—ancestral scruples. They say the dead come back to Rosmersholm in the shape of rushing white horses. I think this shows that it is true.

Rosmer. Be that as it may; what does it matter, so long as I cannot rid myself of the feeling? And believe me, Rebecca, it is as I tell you. The cause that is to win a lasting victory must have for its champion a happy and innocent man.

Rebecca. Is happiness so indispensable to you, Rosmer?

Rosmer. Happiness? Yes, dear,—it is.

Rebecca. To you, who can never laugh?

Rosmer. Yes, in spite of that. Believe me, I have a great capacity for happiness.

Rebecca. Now go for your walk, dear. A good long walk. Do you hear?—See, here is your hat. And your stick, too.

Rosmer [*takes both*]. Thanks. And you won't come with me?

Rebecca. No, no; I can't just now.

Rosmer. Very well, then. You are with me nonetheless.

[*He goes out by the entrance door.*]

REBECCA waits a moment, cautiously watching his departure from behind the open door; then she goes to the door on the right!

Rebecca [*opens the door, and says in a low tone*]. Now, Madam Helseth. You can show him in now.

[*Goes towards the window*]

[*A moment after RECTOR KROLL enters from the right. He bows silently and formally, and keeps his hat in his hand*]

Kroll. He has gone out?

Rebecca. Yes.

Kroll. Does he usually stay out long?

Rebecca. Yes, he does. But one cannot count on him to-day. So if you don't care to meet him—

Kroll. No, no. It is you I want to speak to,—quite alone.

Rebecca. Then we had better not lose time. Sit down, Rector.

[*She sits in the easy-chair by the window. RECTOR KROLL sits on a chair beside her*]

Kroll. Miss West—you can scarcely imagine how deeply and painfully I have taken this to heart—this change in Johanne Rosmer.

Rebecca. We expected it would be so—at first.

Kroll. Only at first?

Rebecca. Rosmer was confident that sooner or later you would join him.

Kroll. I?

Rebecca. You and all his other friends.

Kroll. Ah, there you see! That shows the infirmity of his judgment in all that concerns men and practical life.

Rebecca. But after all—since he feels it a necessity to emancipate himself on all sides—

Kroll. Yes, but wait—that is just what I do not believe.

Rebecca. What do you believe, then?

Kroll. I believe that you are at the bottom of it all.

Rebecca. It is your wife who has put that in your head, Rector Kroll.

Kroll. No matter who has put it in my head. What is certain is that I feel a strong suspicion—an exceedingly strong suspicion—when I think things over and piece together all I know of your behaviour ever since you came here.

Rebecca [looks at him]. I seem to recollect a time when you felt an exceedingly strong faith in me, dear Rector. I might almost call it a warm faith.

Kroll [in a subdued voice]. Whom could you not bewitch—if you tried?

Rebecca. Did I try—?

Kroll. Yes, you did. I am no longer such a fool as to believe that there was any feeling in the matter. You simply wanted to get a footing at Rosmersholm—to strike root here—and in that I was to serve you. Now I see it.

Rebecca. You seem utterly to have forgotten that it was Beata who begged and implored me to come out here?

Kroll. Yes, when you had bewitched her to. Can the feeling she came to entertain for you be called friendship? It was adoration—almost idolatry. It developed into—what shall I call it?—a sort of desperate passion.—Yes, that is the right word for it.

Rebecca. Be so good as to recollect the state your sister was in. So far as I am concerned, I don't think any one can accuse me of being hysterical.

Kroll. No; that you certainly are not. But that makes you all the more dangerous to the people you want to get into your power. It is easy for you to weigh your acts and calculate consequences—just because your heart is cold.

Rebecca. Cold? Are you so sure of that?

Kroll. I am quite certain of it now. Otherwise you could never have lived here

year after year without faltering in the pursuit of your object. Well, well—you have gained your end. You have got him and everything into your power. But in order to do so, you have not scrupled to make him unhappy.

Rebecca. That is not true. It is not I—it is you yourself that have made him unhappy.

Kroll. I?

Rebecca. Yes, when you led him to imagine that he was responsible for Beata's terrible end.

Kroll. Does he feel that so deeply, then?

Rebecca. How can you doubt it? A mind so sensitive as his—

Kroll. I thought that an emancipated man, so-called, was above all such scruples.—But there we have it! Oh yes—I admit I knew how it would be. The descendant of the men that look down on us from these walls—how could he hope to cut himself adrift from all that has been handed down without a break from generation to generation?

Rebecca [looks down thoughtfully]. Johannes Rosmer's spirit is deeply rooted in his ancestry. That is very certain.

Kroll. Yes, and you should have taken that fact into consideration, if you had felt any affection for him. But that sort of consideration was no doubt beyond you. There is such an immeasurable difference between your antecedents and his.

Rebecca. What antecedents do you mean?

Kroll. I am speaking of your origin—your family antecedents, Miss West.

Rebecca. Oh, indeed! Yes, it is quite true that I come of very humble folk. Nevertheless—

Kroll. I am not thinking of rank and position. I allude to your moral antecedents.

Rebecca. Moral—? In what sense?

Kroll. The circumstances of your birth.

Rebecca. What do you mean?

Kroll. I only mention the matter because it accounts for your whole conduct.

Rebecca. I do not understand this. You must explain.

Kroll. I really did not suppose you could require an explanation. Otherwise it would have been very odd that you should have let Dr. West adopt you—

Rebecca [rises]. Ah! Now I understand

Kroll.—and that you should have taken his name. Your mother's name was Gamvik.

Rebecca [walks across the room]. My father's name was Gamvik, Rector Kroll.

Kroll. Your mother's business must have brought her very frequently into contact with the parish doctor.

Rebecca. Yes, it did.

Kroll. And then he takes you into his house—as soon as your mother dies. He treats you harshly; and yet you stay with him. You know that he won't leave you a half-penny—as a matter of fact, you only got a case full of books—and yet you stay on; you bear with him; you nurse him to the last.

Rebecca [stands by the table, looking scornfully at him]. And you account for all this by assuming that there was something immoral—something criminal about my birth?

Kroll. I attribute your care for him to involuntary filial instinct. Indeed I believe your whole conduct is determined by your origin.

Rebecca [vehemently]. But there is not a single word of truth in what you say! And I can prove it! Dr. West did not come to Finmark till after I was born.

Kroll. Excuse me, Miss West. He settled there the year before. I have assured myself of that.

Rebecca. You are mistaken, I say! You are utterly mistaken.

Kroll. You told me the day before yesterday that you were nine-and-twenty—in your thirtieth year.

Rebecca. Indeed! Did I say so?

Kroll. Yes, you did. And I can calculate from that—

Rebecca. Stop! You needn't calculate. I may as well tell you at once: I am a year older than I gave myself out to be.

Kroll [smiles incredulously]. Really! I am surprised! What can be the reason of that?

Rebecca. When I had passed twenty-five, it seemed to me I was getting altogether too old for an unmarried woman. And so I began to lie about my age.

Kroll. You? An emancipated woman! Have you prejudices about the age for marriage?

Rebecca. Yes, it was idiotic of me—idiotic and absurd. But some folly or other

will always cling to us, not to be shaken off. We are made so.

Kroll. Well, so be it; but my calculation may be right, nonetheless. For Dr. West was up there on a short visit the year before he got the appointment.

Rebecca [with a vehement outburst]. It is not true!

Kroll. Is it not true?

Rebecca. No. My mother never spoke of any such visit.

Kroll. Did she not?

Rebecca. No, never. Nor Dr. West either; not a word about it.

Kroll. Might not that be because they both had reasons for suppressing a year? Just as you have done, Miss West. Perhaps it is a family foible.

Rebecca [walks about clenching and wringing her hands]. It is impossible. You want to cheat me into believing it. This can never, never be true. It cannot! Never in this world—

Kroll [rises]. My dear Miss West—why in heaven's name are you so terribly excited? You quite frighten me! What am I to think—to believe—?

Rebecca. Nothing! You are to think and believe nothing.

Kroll. Then you must really tell me how you can take this affair—this possibility—so terribly to heart.

Rebecca [controlling herself]. It is perfectly simple, Rector Kroll. I have no wish to be taken for an illegitimate child.

Kroll. Indeed! Well, well, let us be satisfied with that explanation—in the meantime. But in that case you must still have a certain—prejudice on that point, too?

Rebecca. Yes, I suppose I have.

Kroll. Ah, I fancy it is much the same with most of what you call your "emancipation." You have read yourself into a number of new ideas and opinions. You have got a sort of smattering of recent discoveries in various fields—discoveries that seem to overthrow certain principles which have hitherto been held impregnable and unassailable. But all this has only been a matter of the intellect, Miss West—a superficial acquisition. It has not passed into your blood.

Rebecca [thoughtfully]. Perhaps you are right.

Kroll. Yes, look into your own mind, and you will see! And if this is the case with

you, one may easily guess how it must be with Johannes Rosmer. It is sheer, unmitigated madness—it is running blindfold to destruction—for him to think of coming openly forward and confessing himself an apostate! Only think—a man of his sensitive nature! Imagine him disowned and persecuted by the circle of which he has always formed a part—exposed to ruthless attacks from all the best people in the community! He is not—he never can be the man to endure all that.

Rebecca. He must endure it! It is too late now for him to retreat.

Kroll. Not at all too late. By no means. What has happened can be hushed up—or at least explained away as a mere temporary aberration, however deplorable. But—one measure is certainly indispensable.

Rebecca. And what is that?

Kroll. You must get him to legalise the position, Miss West.

Rebecca. His position towards me?

Kroll. Yes. You must make him do that.

Rebecca. Then you absolutely cannot clear your mind of the idea that our position requires to be—legalised, as you call it?

Kroll. I would rather not go into the matter too closely. But I believe I have noticed that it is nowhere easier to break through all so-called prejudices than in—h'm—

Rebecca. In the relation between man and woman, you mean?

Kroll. Yes,—to speak plainly—I think so.

Rebecca [*wanders across the room and looks out at the window*]. I could almost say—I wish you were right, Rector Kroll.

Kroll. What do you mean by that? You say it so strangely.

Rebecca. Oh well—please let us drop the subject. Ah,—there he comes.

Kroll. Already! Then I will go.

Rebecca [*goes towards him*]. No—please stay. There is something I want you to hear.

Kroll. Not now. I don't feel as if I could bear to see him.

Rebecca. I beg you to stay. Do! If not, you will regret it by-and-by. It is the last time I shall ask you for anything.

Kroll [*looks at her in surprise and puts down his hat*]. Very well, Miss West—so be it, then.

[*A short silence. Then JOHANNES ROSMER enters from the hall*]

Rosmer [*sees the Rector, and stops in the doorway*]. What!—Are you here?

Rebecca. He did not wish to meet you, dear.²

Kroll [*involuntarily*]. "Dear!"

Rebecca. Yes, Rector Kroll, Rosmer and I say "dear" to each other. That is one result of our "position."

Kroll. Was that what you wanted me to hear?

Rebecca. That—and a little more.

Rosmer [*comes forward*]. What is the object of this visit?

Kroll. I wanted to try once more to stop you and win you back to us.

Rosmer [*points to the newspaper*]. After what appears in that paper?

Kroll. I did not write it.

Rosmer. Did you make the slightest effort to prevent its appearance?

Kroll. That would have been to betray the cause I serve. And, besides, it was not in my power.

Rebecca [*tears the paper into shreds, crushes up the pieces and throws them behind the stove*]. There! Now it is out of sight. And let it be out of mind, too. For there will be nothing more of that sort, Rosmer.

Kroll. Ah, if you could only make sure of that!

Rebecca. Come, let us sit down, dear. All three of us. And then I will tell you everything.

Rosmer [*seats himself mechanically*]. What has come over you, Rebecca? This unnatural calmness—what is it?

Rebecca. The calmness of resolution. [*Seats herself*] Pray sit down, too, Rector.

[*RECTOR KROLL seats himself on the sofa*]

Rosmer. Resolution, you say? What resolution?

Rebecca. I am going to give you back what you require in order to live your life. Dear friend, you shall have your happy innocence back again!

Rosmer. What can you mean?

Rebecca. I have only to tell you something. That will be enough.

Rosmer. Well!

Rebecca. When I came down here from Finmark—along with Dr. West—it seemed to me that a great, wide new world was

² In the original, Rebecca here addresses Rosmer as "du" for the first time in Kroll's presence.

opening up before me. The Doctor had taught me all sorts of things—all the fragmentary knowledge of life that I possessed in those days. [*With a struggle and in a scarcely audible voice*] And then—

Kroll. And then?

Rosmer. But Rebecca—I know all this.

Rebecca [*mastering herself*]. Yes, yes—you are right. You know enough about this.

Kroll [*looks hard at her*]. Perhaps I had better go.

Rebecca. No, please stay where you are, my dear Rector. [*To ROSMER*] Well, you see, this was how it was—I wanted to take my share in the life of the new era that was dawning, with all its new ideas.—Rector Kroll told me one day that Ulric Brendel had had great influence over you while you were still a boy. I thought it must surely be possible for me to carry on his work.

Rosmer. You came here with a secret design—?

Rebecca. We two, I thought, should march onward in freedom, side by side. Ever onward. Ever farther and farther to the front. But between you and perfect emancipation there rose that dismal, insurmountable barrier.

Rosmer. What barrier do you mean?

Rebecca. I mean this, Rosmer: You could grow into freedom only in the clear, fresh sunshine—and here you were pining, sickening in the gloom of such a marriage.

Rosmer. You have never before spoken to me of my marriage in that tone.

Rebecca. No, I did not dare to, for I should have frightened you.

Kroll [*nods to ROSMER*]. Do you hear that?

Rebecca [*goes on*]. But I saw quite well where your deliverance lay—your only deliverance. And then I went to work.

Rosmer. Went to work? In what way?

Kroll. Do you mean that—?

Rebecca. Yes, Rosmer— [*Rises*] Sit still. You, too, Rector Kroll. But now it must out. It was not you, Rosmer. You are innocent. It was I that lured—that ended in luring Beata out into the paths of delusion—

Rosmer [*springs up*]. Rebecca!

Kroll [*rises from the sofa*]. The paths of delusion!

Rebecca. The paths—that led to the mill-race. Now you know it both of you.

Rosmer [*as if stunned*]. But I don't understand— What is it she is saying? I don't understand a word—!

Kroll. Oh yes, Rosmer, I am beginning to understand.

Rosmer. But what did you do? What can you possibly have told her? There was nothing—absolutely nothing to tell!

Rebecca. She came to know that you were working yourself free from all the old prejudices.

Rosmer. Yes, but that was not the case at that time.

Rebecca. I knew that it soon would be.

Kroll [*nods to ROSMER*]. Aha!

Rosmer. And then? What more? I must know all now.

Rebecca. Some time after—I begged and implored her to let me go away from Rosmersholm.

Rosmer. Why did you want to go—then?

Rebecca. I did not want to go; I wanted to stay here, where I was. But I told her that it would be best for us all—that I should go away in time. I gave her to understand that if I stayed here any longer, I could not—I could not tell—what might happen.

Rosmer. Then this is what you said and did!

Rebecca. Yes, Rosmer.

Rosmer. This is what you call “going to work.”

Rebecca [*in a broken voice*]. I called it so, yes.

Rosmer [*after a pause*]. Have you confessed all now, Rebecca?

Rebecca. Yes.

Kroll. Not all.

Rebecca [*looks at him in fear*]. What more should there be?

Kroll. Did you not at last give Beata to understand that it was necessary—not only that it would be wisest, but that it was necessary—both for your own sake and Rosmer's, that you should go away somewhere—as soon as possible? Well?

Rebecca [*low and indistinctly*]. Perhaps I did say something of the sort.

Rosmer [*sinks into the armchair by the window*]. And this tissue of lies and deceit she—my unhappy, sick wife believed in! Believed in it so firmly! So immovably! [*Looks up at REBECCA*] And she never turned to me. Never said one word to me!

Oh, Rebecca,—I can see it in your face—
you dissuaded her from it!

Rebecca. She had conceived a fixed idea
that she, as a childless wife, had no right to
be here. And then she imagined that it was
her duty to you to efface herself.

Rosmer. And you—you did nothing to
disabuse her of the idea?

Rebecca. No.

Kroll. Perhaps you confirmed her in it?
Answer me! Did you not?

Rebecca. I believe she may have under-
stood me so.

Rosmer. Yes, yes—and in everything she
bowed before your will. And she did efface
herself! [*Springs up*] How could you—how
could you play this ghastly game!

Rebecca. It seemed to me I had to
choose between your life and hers, Rosmer.

Kroll [*severely and impressively*]. That
choice was not for you to make.

Rebecca [*vehemently*]. You think then
that I was cool and calculating and self-
possessed all the time! I was not the same
woman then that I am now, as I stand here
telling it all. Besides, there are two sorts of
will in us I believe! I wanted Beata away,
by one means or another; but I never really
believed that it would come to pass. As I
felt my way forward, at each step I ven-
tured, I seemed to hear something within
me cry out: No farther! Not a step far-
ther! And yet I could not stop. I had to
venture the least little bit farther. Only
one hair's-breadth more. And then one
more—and always one more.—And then it
happened.—That is the way such things
come about. [*A short silence*]

Rosmer [*to REBECCA*]. What do you
think lies before you now? After this?

Rebecca. Things must go with me as
they will. It doesn't greatly matter.

Kroll. Not a word of remorse! Is it pos-
sible you feel none?

Rebecca [*coldly putting aside his ques-
tion*]. Excuse me, Rector Kroll—that is a
matter which concerns no one but me. I
must settle it with myself.

Kroll [*to ROSMER*]. And this is the
woman you are living under the same roof
with—in the closest intimacy! [*Looks
round at the pictures*] Oh, if those that are
gone could see us now!

Rosmer. Are you going back to town?

Kroll [*takes up his hat*]. Yes. The sooner
the better.

Rosmer [*does the same*]. Then I will go
with you.

Kroll. Will you? Ah, yes, I was sure we
had not lost you for good.

Rosmer. Come then, Kroll! Come!

[*Both go out through the hall without
looking at REBECCA*]

[*After a moment, REBECCA goes cau-
tiously to the window and looks out
through the flowers*]

Rebecca [*speaks to herself under her
breath*]. Not over the foot-bridge to-day
either. He goes round. Never across the
mill-race. Never. [*Leaves window*] Well,
well, well!

[*Goes and pulls the bell-rope; a mo-
ment after, MADAM HELSETH enters
from the right*]

Madam Helseth. What is it, Miss?

Rebecca. Madam Helseth, would you be
so good as to have my trunk brought down
from the garret?

Madam Helseth. Your trunk?

Rebecca. Yes—the brown sealskin trunk,
you know.

Madam Helseth. Yes, yes. But, Lord
preserve us—are you going on a journey,
Miss?

Rebecca. Yes—now I am going on a
journey, Madam Helseth.

Madam Helseth. And immediately!

Rebecca. As soon as I have packed up.

Madam Helseth. Well, I've never heard
the like of that! But you'll come back
again soon, Miss, of course?

Rebecca. I shall never come back again.

Madam Helseth. Never! Dear Lord,
what will things be like at Rosmersholm
when you're gone, Miss? And the poor
Pastor was just beginning to be so happy
and comfortable.

Rebecca. Yes, but I have taken fright
to-day, Madam Helseth.

Madam Helseth. Taken fright! Dear,
dear! how was that?

Rebecca. I thought I saw something like
a glimpse of white horses.

Madam Helseth. White horses! In
broad daylight!

Rebecca. Oh, they are abroad early and
late—the white horses of Rosmersholm.
[*With a change of tone*] Well,—about the
trunk, Madam Helseth.

Madam Helseth. Yes, yes. The trunk.

[*Both go out to the right*]

ACT FOUR

The sitting-room at Rosmersholm. Late evening. A lighted lamp, with a shade over it, on the table.

REBECCA. WEST stands by the table, packing some small articles in a hand-bag. Her cloak, hat and the white crocheted shawl are hanging over the back of the sofa.

MADAM HELSETH enters from the right.

Madam Helseth [*speaks in a low voice and appears ill at ease*]. All your things have been taken down, Miss. They are in the kitchen passage.

Rebecca. Very well. You have ordered the carriage?

Madam Helseth. Yes. The coachman wants to know what time he ought to be here.

Rebecca. About eleven o'clock, I think. The steamer starts at midnight.

Madam Helseth [*hesitates a little*]. But the Pastor? If he shouldn't be home by that time?

Rebecca. I shall go all the same. If I don't see him, you can tell him that I will write to him—a long letter. Tell him that.

Madam Helseth. Yes, writing—that may be all very well. But, poor Miss West—I do think you should try to speak to him once more.

Rebecca. Perhaps so. And yet—perhaps not.

Madam Helseth. Well—that I should like to see this! I never thought of such a thing.

Rebecca. What did you think then, Madam Helseth?

Madam Helseth. Well, I certainly thought Pastor Rosmer was a more dependable man than this.

Rebecca. Dependable?

Madam Helseth. Yes, that's what I say.

Rebecca. Why, my dear Madam Helseth, what do you mean?

Madam Helseth. I mean what's right and true, Miss. He shouldn't get out of it in this way, that he shouldn't.

Rebecca [*looks at her*]. Come now, Madam Helseth, tell me plainly: what do you think is the reason I am going away?

Madam Helseth. Well, Heaven forgive us, I suppose it can't be helped, Miss. Ah, well, well, well! But I certainly don't think the Pastor's behaving handsome-like. Mor-

tensgård had some excuse; for her husband was alive, so that they two couldn't marry, however much they wanted to. But as for the Pastor—h'm!

Rebecca [*with a faint smile*]. Could you have believed such a thing of Pastor Rosmer and me?

Madam Helseth. No, never in this world. At least, I mean—not until to-day.

Rebecca. But to-day, then—?

Madam Helseth. Well,—after all the horrible things that they tell me the papers are saying about the Pastor—

Rebecca. Aha!

Madam Helseth. For the man that can go over to Mortensgård's religion—good Lord, I can believe anything of him.

Rebecca. Oh, yes, I suppose so. But what about me? What have you to say about me?

Madam Helseth. Lord preserve us, Miss—I don't see that there's much to be said against you. It's not so easy for a lone woman to be always on her guard, that's certain.—We're all of us human, Miss West.

Rebecca. That's very true, Madam Helseth. We are all of us human.—What are you listening to?

Madam Helseth [*in a low voice*]. Oh, Lord,—if I don't believe that's him coming.

Rebecca [*starts*]. After all then—? [*Resolutely*] Well well; so be it.

[JOHANNES ROSMER enters from the hall]

Rosmer [*sees the hand-bag, etc., turns to REBECCA, and asks*]. What does this mean?

Rebecca. I am going.

Rosmer. At once?

Rebecca. Yes. [TO MADAM HELSETH] Eleven o'clock then.

Madam Helseth. Very well, Miss.

[*Goes out to the right*]

Rosmer [*after a short pause*]. Where are you going to, Rebecca?

Rebecca. North, by the steamer.

Rosmer. North? What takes you to the North?

Rebecca. It was there I came from.

Rosmer. But you have no ties there now.

Rebecca. I have none here either.

Rosmer. What do you think of doing?

Rebecca. I don't know. I only want to have done with it all.

Rosmer. To have done with it?

Rebecca. Rosmersholm has broken me.

Rosmer [*his attention aroused*]. Do you say that?

Rebecca. Broken me utterly and hopelessly.—I had a free and fearless will when I came here. Now I have bent my neck under a strange law.—From this day forth, I feel as if I had no courage for anything in the world.

Rosmer. Why not? What is the law that you say you have—?

Rebecca. Dear, don't let us talk of that just now.—What happened between you and the Rector?

Rosmer. We have made peace.

Rebecca. Ah yes; so that was the end.

Rosmer. He gathered all our old friends together at his house. They have made it clear to me that the work of ennobling the minds of men—is not for me.—And besides, it is hopeless in itself, Rebecca.—I shall let it alone.

Rebecca. Yes, yes—perhaps it is best so.

Rosmer. Is that what you say now? Do you think so now?

Rebecca. I have come to think so—in the last few days.

Rosmer. You are lying, Rebecca.

Rebecca. Lying—!

Rosmer. Yes, you are lying. You have never believed in me. You have never believed that I was man enough to carry the cause through to victory.

Rebecca. I believed that we two together could do it.

Rosmer. That is not true. You thought that you yourself could do something great in life; and that you could use me to further your ends. I was to be a serviceable instrument to you—that is what you thought.

Rebecca. Listen to me, Rosmer—

Rosmer [*scaats himself listlessly on the sofa*]. Oh, what is the use? I see through it all now—I have been like a glove in your hands.

Rebecca. Listen, Rosmer. Hear what I have to say. It will be for the last time. [*Sits in a chair close to the sofa*] I intended to write you all about it—when I was back in the North. But I daresay it is best that you should hear it at once.

Rosmer. Have you more confessions to make?

Rebecca. The greatest of all is to come.

Rosmer. The greatest?

Rebecca. What you have never suspected. What gives light and shade to all the rest.

Rosmer [*shakes his head*]. I don't understand you at all.

Rebecca. It is perfectly true that I once schemed to gain a footing at Rosmersholm. I thought I could not fail to turn things to good account here. In one way or the other—you understand.

Rosmer. Well, you accomplished your ends.

Rebecca. I believe I could have accomplished anything, anything in the world—at that time. For I had still my fearless, free-born will. I knew no scruples—I stood in awe of no human tie.—But then began what has broken my will—and cowed me so pitifully for all my days.

Rosmer. What began? Do not speak in riddles.

Rebecca. It came over me,—this wild, uncontrollable passion—. Oh, Rosmer—!

Rosmer. Passion? You—! For what?

Rebecca. For you.

Rosmer [*tries to spring up*]. What is this?

Rebecca [*stops him*]. Sit still, dear; there is more to tell.

Rosmer. And you mean to say—that you have loved me—in that way!

Rebecca. I thought that it should be called love—then. Yes, I thought it was love. But it was not. It was what I said. It was a wild, uncontrollable passion.

Rosmer [*with difficulty*]. Rebecca, is it really you—you yourself—that you are speaking of?

Rebecca. Yes, would you believe it, Rosmer?

Rosmer. Then it was because of this—under the influence of this—that you—that you “went to work,” as you call it?

Rebecca. It came upon me like a storm on the sea. It was like one of the storms we sometimes have in the North in the winter time. It seizes you—and whirls you along with it—wherever it will. There is no resisting it.

Rosmer. And so it swept the unhappy Beata into the mill-race.

Rebecca. Yes; for it was a life-and-death struggle between Beata and me at that time.

Rosmer. Assuredly you were the strongest at Rosmersholm. Stronger than Beata and I together.

Rebecca. I judged you rightly in so far that I was sure I could never reach you un-

til you were a free man, both in circumstances—and in spirit.

Rosmer. But I don't understand you, Rebecca. You—yourself—your whole conduct is an insoluble riddle to me. I am free now—both in spirit and in circumstances. You have reached the very goal you aimed at from the first. And yet—

Rebecca. I have never stood farther from my goal than now.

Rosmer. And yet I say—when I asked you yesterday—begged you to be my wife—you cried out, as if in fear, that it could never be.

Rebecca. I cried out in despair, Rosmer.
Rosmer. Why?

Rebecca. Because Rosmersholm has sapped my strength. My old fearless will has had its wings clipped here. It is crippled! The time is past when I had courage for anything in the world. I have lost the power of action, Rosmer.

Rosmer. Tell me how this has come about.

Rebecca. It has come about through my life with you.

Rosmer. But how? How?

Rebecca. When I was left alone with you here,—and when you had become yourself again—

Rosmer. Yes, yes?

Rebecca. —for you were never quite yourself so long as Beata lived—

Rosmer. I am afraid you are right there.

Rebecca. But when I found myself sharing your life here,—in quiet—in solitude,—when you showed me all your thoughts without reserve—every tender and delicate feeling, just as it came to you—then the great change came over me. Little by little, you understand. Almost imperceptibly—but at last with such overwhelming force that it reached to the depths of my soul.

Rosmer. Oh, is this true, Rebecca?

Rebecca. All the rest—the horrible sense-intoxicated desire—passed far, far away from me. All the whirling passions settled down into quiet and silence. Rest descended on my soul—a stillness as on one of our northern bird-cliffs under the midnight sun.

Rosmer. Tell me more of this. Tell me all you can.

Rebecca. There is not much more, dear. Only this—it was love that was born in me. The great self-denying love, that is content

with life, as we two have lived it together.

Rosmer. Oh, if I had only had the faintest suspicion of all this!

Rebecca. It is best as it is. Yesterday—when you asked me if I would be your wife—I cried out with joy—

Rosmer. Yes, did you not, Rebecca! I thought that was the meaning of your cry.

Rebecca. For a moment, yes. I had forgotten myself. It was my old buoyant will that was struggling to be free. But it has no energy left now—no power of endurance.

Rosmer. How do you account for what has happened to you?

Rebecca. It is the Rosmer view of life—or your view of life, at any rate—that has infected my will.

Rosmer. Infected?

Rebecca. And made it sick. Enslaved it to laws that had no power over me before. You—life with you—has ennobled my mind—

Rosmer. Oh that I could believe it!

Rebecca. You may safely believe it! The Rosmer view of life ennobles. But—
[Shaking her head] But—but—

Rosmer. But—? Well?

Rebecca. —but it kills happiness.

Rosmer. Do you think so, Rebecca?

Rebecca. My happiness, at any rate.

Rosmer. Yes, but are you so certain of that? If I were to ask you again now—? If I were to beg and entreat you—?

Rebecca. Dear,—never speak of this again! It is impossible—! For you must know, Rosmer, I have a—a past behind me.

Rosmer. More than what you have told me?

Rebecca. Yes. Something different and something more.

Rosmer [with a faint smile]. Is it not strange, Rebecca? Some such idea has crossed my mind now and then.

Rebecca. It has? And yet—? Even so—?

Rosmer. I never believed it. I only played with it—in my thoughts, you understand.

Rebecca. If you wish it, I will tell you all, at once.

Rosmer [turning it off]. No, no! I will not hear a word. Whatever it may be—I can forget it.

Rebecca. But I cannot.

Rosmer. Oh Rebecca—!

Rebecca. Yes, Rosmer—this is the ter-

rible part of it: that now, when all life's happiness is within my grasp—my heart is changed, and my own past cuts me off from it.

Rosmer. Your past is dead, Rebecca. It has no hold on you any more—it is no part of you—as you are now.

Rebecca. Oh, you know that these are only phrases, dear. And innocence? Where am I to get that from?

Rosmer [sadly]. Ah,—innocence.

Rebecca. Yes, innocence. That is the source of peace and happiness. That was the vital truth you were to implant in the coming generation of happy noble-men—

Rosmer. Oh, don't remind me of that. It was only an abortive dream, Rebecca—an immature idea, that I myself no longer believe in.—Ah no, we cannot be ennobled from without, Rebecca.

Rebecca [softly]. Not even by tranquil love, Rosmer?

Rosmer [thoughtfully]. Yes—that would be the great thing—the most glorious in life, almost—if it were so. [*Moves uneasily*] But how can I be certain of that? How convince myself?

Rebecca. Do you not believe me, Rosmer?

Rosmer. Oh, Rebecca—how can I believe in you, fully? You who have all this while been cloaking, concealing such a multitude of things!—Now you come forward with something new. If you have a secret purpose in all this, tell me plainly what it is. Is there anything you want to gain by it? You know that I will gladly do everything I can for you.

Rebecca [wringing her hands]. Oh this killing doubt—! Rosmer—Rosmer—!

Rosmer. Yes, is it not terrible, Rebecca? But I cannot help it. I shall never be able to shake off the doubt. I can never be absolutely sure that you are mine in pure and perfect love.

Rebecca. Is there nothing in the depths of your own heart that bears witness to the transformation in me? And tells you that it is due to you—and you alone?

Rosmer. Oh, Rebecca—I no longer believe in my power of transforming any one. My faith in myself is utterly dead. I believe neither in myself nor in you.

Rebecca [looks darkly at him]. Then how will you be able to live your life?

Rosmer. That I don't know. I cannot

imagine how. I don't think I can live it.—And I know of nothing in the world that is worth living for.

Rebecca. Oh, life—life will renew itself. Let us hold fast to it, Rosmer.—We shall leave it soon enough.

Rosmer [springs up restlessly]. Then give me my faith again! My faith in you, Rebecca! My faith in your love! Proof! I must have proof!

Rebecca. Proof? How can I give you proof—?

Rosmer. You must! [*Walks across the room*] I cannot bear this desolation—this horrible emptiness—this—this—

[*A loud knock at the hall door*]

Rebecca [starts up from her chair]. Ah—did you hear that?

[*The door opens. ULRIC BRENDDEL enters. He has a white shirt on, a black coat and a good pair of boots, with his trousers tucked into them. Otherwise he is dressed as in the first Act. He looks excited*]

Rosmer. Ah, is it you, Mr. Brendel?

Brendel. Johannes, my boy—hail—and farewell!

Rosmer. Where are you going so late?

Brendel. Downhill.

Rosmer. How—?

Brendel. I am going homewards, my beloved pupil. I am home-sick for the mighty Nothingness.

Rosmer. Something has happened to you, Mr. Brendel! What is it?

Brendel. So you observe the transformation? Yes—well you may. When I last set foot in these halls—I stood before you as a man of substance and slapped my breast-pocket.

Rosmer. Indeed! I don't quite understand—

Brendel. But as you see me this night, I am a deposed monarch on the ash-heap that was my palace.

Rosmer. If there is anything I can do for you—

Brendel. You have preserved your child-like heart, Johannes. Can you grant me a loan?

Rosmer. Yes, yes, most willingly!

Brendel. Can you spare me an ideal or two?

Rosmer. What do you say?

Brendel. One or two cast-off ideals. It

would be an act of charity. For I'm cleaned out, my boy. Ruined, beggared.

Rebecca. Have you not delivered your lecture?

Brendel. No, seductive lady. What do you think? Just as I am standing ready to pour forth the horn of plenty, I make the painful discovery that I am bankrupt.

Rebecca. But all your unwritten works—?

Brendel. For five-and-twenty years I have sat like a miser on his double-locked treasure-chest. And then yesterday—when I open it and want to display the treasure—there's none there! The teeth of time had ground it into dust. There was nix and nothing in the whole concern.

Rosmer. But are you so sure of that?

Brendel. There's no room for doubt, my dear fellow. The President has convinced me of it.

Rosmer. The President?

Brendel. Well well—His Excellency then. *Ganz nach Belieben.*

Rosmer. What do you mean?

Brendel. Peter Mortensgård, of course.

Rosmer. What?

Brendel [*mysteriously*]. Hush, hush, hush! Peter Mortensgård is the lord and leader of the future. Never have I stood in a more august presence. Peter Mortensgård has the secret of omnipotence. He can do whatever he will.

Rosmer. Oh, don't believe that.

Brendel. Yes, my boy! For Peter Mortensgård never wills more than he can do. Peter Mortensgård is capable of living his life without ideals. And that, do you see—that is just the mighty secret of action and of victory. It is the sum of the whole world's wisdom. *Basta!*

Rosmer [*in a low voice*]. Now I understand—why you leave here poorer than you came.

Brendel. *Bien!* Then take a *Beispiel* by your ancient teacher. Rub out all that he once imprinted on your mind. Build not thy house on shifting sand. And look ahead—and feel your way—before you build on this exquisite creature, who here lends sweetness to your life.

Rebecca. Is it me you mean?

Brendel. Yes, my fascinating mermaid.

Rebecca. Why am I not to be built on?

Brendel [*comes a step nearer*]. I gather

that my former pupil has a great cause to carry forward to victory.

Rebecca. What then—?

Brendel. Victory is assured. But—mark me well—on one indispensable condition.

Rebecca. Which is—?

Brendel [*taking her gently by the wrist*]. That the woman who loves him shall gladly go out into the kitchen and hack off her tender, rosy-white little finger—here—just here at the middle joint. Item, that the aforesaid loving woman—again gladly—shall slice off her incomparably-moulded left ear. [*Lets her go, and turns to ROSMER*] Farewell, my conquering Johannes.

Rosmer. Are you going now? In the dark night?

Brendel. The dark night is best. Peace be with you.

[*He goes. There is a short silence in the room*]

Rebecca [*breathes heavily*]. Oh, how close and sultry it is here!

[*Goes to the window, opens it, and remains standing by it*]

Rosmer [*sits down in the armchair by the stove*]. There is nothing else for it after all, *Rebecca*. I see it. You must go away.

Rebecca. Yes, I see no choice.

Rosmer. Let us make the most of our last hour. Come here and sit by me.

Rebecca [*goes and sits on the sofa*]. What do you want to say to me, *Rosmer*?

Rosmer. First, I want to tell you that you need not feel any anxiety about your future.

Rebecca [*smiles*]. H'm, my future.

Rosmer. I have long ago arranged for everything. Whatever may happen, you are provided for.

Rebecca. That too, my dear one?

Rosmer. You might surely have known that.

Rebecca. It is many a long day since I have given a thought to such things.

Rosmer. Yes, yes—you thought things would always remain as they were between us.

Rebecca. Yes, I thought so.

Rosmer. So did I. But if I were to go—

Rebecca. Oh, *Rosmer*—you will live longer than I.

Rosmer. Surely my worthless life lies in my own hands.

Rebecca. What is this? You are never thinking of—!

Rosmer. Do you think it would be so strange? After this pitiful, lamentable defeat! I, who was to have borne a great cause on to victory—have I not fled from the battle before it was well begun?

Rebecca. Take up the fight again, Rosmer! Only try—and you shall see, you will conquer. You will ennoble hundreds—thousands of minds. Only try!

Rosmer. Oh, Rebecca—I, who no longer believe in my own mission!

Rebecca. But your mission has stood the test already. You have ennobled one human being at least—me you have ennobled for the rest of my days.

Rosmer. Oh—if I dared believe you.

Rebecca [*pressing her hands together*]. Oh, Rosmer,—do you know of nothing—nothing that could make you believe it?

Rosmer [*starts as if in fear*]. Don't speak of that! Keep away from that, Rebecca! Not a word more.

Rebecca. Yes, this is precisely what we must speak about. Do you know of anything that would kill the doubt? For I know of nothing in the world.

Rosmer. It is well for you that you do not know.—It is well for both of us.

Rebecca. No, no, no.—I will not be put off in this way! If you know of anything that would absolve me in your eyes, I claim as my right to be told of it.

Rosmer [*as if impelled against his will to speak*]. Then let us see. You say that a great love is in you; that through me your mind has been ennobled. Is it so? Is your reckoning just, Rebecca? Shall we try to prove the sum? Say?

Rebecca. I am ready.

Rosmer. At any time?

Rebecca. Whenever you please. The sooner the better.

Rosmer. Then let me see, Rebecca,—if you for my sake—this very evening—
[*Breaks off*] Oh, no, no, no!

Rebecca. Yes, Rosmer! Yes! Tell me, and you shall see.

Rosmer. Have you the courage—have you the will—gladly, as Ulric Brendel said—for my sake, to-night—gladly—to go the same way that Beata went?

Rebecca [*rises slowly from the sofa; almost voiceless*]. Rosmer—!

Rosmer. Yes, Rebecca—that is the ques-

tion that will for ever haunt me—when you are gone. Every hour in the day it will return upon me. Oh, I seem to see you before my very eyes. You are standing out on the foot-bridge—right in the middle. Now you are bending forward over the railing—drawn dizzily downwards, downwards towards the rushing water! No—you recoil. You have not the heart to do what she dared.

Rebecca. But if I had the heart to do it? And the will to do it gladly? What then?

Rosmer. I should have to believe you then. I should recover my faith in my mission. Faith in my power to ennoble human souls. Faith in the human soul's power to attain nobility.

Rebecca [*takes up her shawl slowly and puts it over her head; says with composure*]. You shall have your faith again.

Rosmer. Have you the will and the courage—for this, Rebecca?

Rebecca. That you shall see to-morrow—or afterwards—when they find my body.

Rosmer [*puts his hand to his forehead*]. There is a horrible fascination in this—!

Rebecca. For I don't want to remain down there. Not longer than necessary. You must see that they find me.

Rosmer [*springs up*]. But all this—is nothing but madness. Go—or stay! I will take your bare word this time too.

Rebecca. Phrases, Rosmer! Let us have no more cowardly subterfuges, dear! How can you believe me on my bare word after this day?

Rosmer. I shrink from seeing your defeat, Rebecca!

Rebecca. It will be no defeat.

Rosmer. Yes, it will. You will never bring yourself to go Beata's way.

Rebecca. Do you think not?

Rosmer. Never. You are not like Beata. You are not under the dominion of a distorted view of life.

Rebecca. But I am under the dominion of the Rosmersholm view of life—now. What I have sinned—it is fit that I should expiate.

Rosmer [*looks at her fixedly*]. Is that your point of view?

Rebecca. Yes.

Rosmer [*with resolution*]. Well then, I stand firm in our emancipated view of life, Rebecca. There is no judge over us; and therefore we must do justice upon ourselves.

Rebecca [*misunderstanding him*]. Yes, that is true—that too. My going away will save what is best in you.

Rosmer. Oh, there is nothing left to save in me.

Rebecca. Yes, there is. But I—after to-day, I should only be a sea-troll dragging down the ship that is to carry you forward. I must go overboard. Why should I remain here in the world, trailing after me my own crippled life? Why brood and brood over the happiness that my past has forfeited for ever? I must give up the game, Rosmer.

Rosmer. If you go—I go with you.

Rebecca [*smiles almost imperceptibly, looks at him, and says more softly*]. Yes, come with me—and see—

Rosmer. I go with you, I say.

Rebecca. To the foot-bridge, yes. You know you never dare go out upon it.

Rosmer. Have you noticed that?

Rebecca [*sadly and brokenly*]. Yes.—It was that that made my love hopeless.

Rosmer. Rebecca,—now I lay my hand on your head—[*Does so*—and I wed you as my true wife.

Rebecca [*takes both his hands, and bows her head towards his breast*]. Thanks, Rosmer. [*Lets him go*] And now I will go—gladly.

Rosmer. Man and wife should go together.

Rebecca. Only to the bridge, Rosmer.

Rosmer. Out on to it, too. As far as you go—so far shall I go with you. For now I dare.

Rebecca. Are you absolutely certain—that this way is the best for you?

Rosmer. I am certain that it is the only way.

Rebecca. If you were deceiving yourself?

If it were only a delusion? One of those white horses of Rosmersholm.

Rosmer. It may be so. For we can never escape from them—we of this house.

Rebecca. Then stay, Rosmer!

Rosmer. The husband shall go with his wife, as the wife with her husband.

Rebecca. Yes, but first tell me this: Is it you who follow me? Or is it I who follow you?

Rosmer. We shall never think that question out.

Rebecca. But I should like to know.

Rosmer. We go with each other, Rebecca—I with you, and you with me.

Rebecca. I almost think that is the truth.

Rosmer. For now we two are one.

Rebecca. Yes. We are one. Come! We go gladly. [*They go out hand in hand through the hall, and are seen to turn to the left. The door remains open. The room stands empty for a little while. Then the door to the right is opened by MADAM HELSETH*]

Madam Helseth. Miss West—the carriage is— [*Looks round*] Not here? Out together at this time of night? Well—I must say—! H'm! [*Goes out into the hall, looks round and comes in again*] Not on the garden seat. Ah, well, well. [*Goes to the window and looks out*] Oh, good God! that white thing there—! My soul! They're both of them out on the bridge! God forgive the sinful creatures—if they're not in each other's arms! [*Shrieks aloud*] Oh—down—both of them! Out into the mill-race! Help! Help! [*Her knees tremble; she holds on to the chair-back, shaking all over; she can scarcely get the words out*] No. No help here.—The dead wife has taken them.

THE END

COMRADES

(KAMRATERNA)

BY AUGUST STRINDBERG

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AUGUST STRINDBERG AND HIS PLAYS

AUGUST STRINDBERG, the author of *Comrades*, was born in Stockholm in 1849 and for a time attended the University of Upsala, where his studies were interrupted by ill health. Although from the first a dramatist by instinct and desire, he was by turns schoolmaster, journalist, actor, and librarian. His short stories and novels established his reputation as a writer, and the production of his first great play, *The Father*, in 1887, definitely marked him as the chief dramatist of Sweden. He founded his own theatre in Stockholm, where he staged his plays. He was married three times, each marriage ending in divorce. This fact has been offered as an explanation of the singularly bitter attitude toward women that is shown in several of his most celebrated plays; but this attitude is not necessarily the result of his unhappy experiences, since it manifested itself even before his first marriage. As a result of overwork and nervous strain, his mind became affected, and he had to spend a year in a sanitarium, but in 1897 he resumed his work with even greater vigor and success. He died in 1912.

Strindberg has become recognized as one of the most original and powerful forces in modern drama. Although younger than Ibsen and Björnson, who created the modern drama of Norway as he did that of Sweden, he was not influenced by them, and he ranks with them as an innovator. He belongs, simply as a man of the theatre, perhaps more to the present, and even to the future, than either Ibsen or Björnson. Strindberg is one of the most difficult of dramatists to classify, for his plays cover so wide a range of matter, form, and style: historical romances; historical biographical plays, in which he applies the new psychology to old material; naturalistic comedies and tragedies; fairy plays, and plays of mysticism and fantasy. He is known most widely as a naturalist, perhaps, but he is a naturalist who penetrates beneath surfaces, seeking inner realities. In this incessant search he grows impatient of restrictions of form, and progresses farther and farther beyond mere surface realism, altering his technique and style (or, rather, having it altered for him by the inner necessities of his material), until he reaches sheer symbolism, mysticism, and that method which he was the first to discover and practice, and which is now termed "expressionism."

Yet all this immense and varied product possesses an inner unity provided by Strindberg's own personality and by his search for reality and truth. He is the most subjective of dramatists; his plays mirror his own states of mind; and to the last he is merely seeking a suitable form of expression for his inner self. Being impelled to utterance simply by this innate necessity, he has no set theories of technique, no "philosophy of composition." Nor has he, like Ibsen, any set ideas, or any constructive program. He is from first to last primarily a psychologist, who sees human character not as something fixed but as a variable in a state of flux, and not as single but as functioning on various planes of consciousness. This idea is implicit even in his earlier and naturalistic plays, and finally it altogether dictates the technique of his later and "expressionistic" plays, which actually mingle reality with dream. His characters are always forceful, always distinguished by mentality, and never commonplace. His psychology is of the most modern type; he even anticipates the theories of the current psycho-analytic school.

To the general public Strindberg is probably best known by his naturalistic plays, such as *The Father*, *Comrades*, *Countess Julie*, and *The Dance of Death*, penetrating studies in sex-relationship that show his cynical attitude toward women. It is not, however, these anti-feministic plays, powerful as they are, but such expressionistic plays as *The Spook Sonata* and the trilogy *Toward Damascus* that place Strindberg as a modern among the moderns and that have strongly influenced the dramaturgic practice of the younger dramatists.

Comrades, though written in 1888, apparently was not produced until 1910, in Stockholm.

CHARACTERS

AXEL, *an artist*
BERTHA, *his wife, artist*
ABEL, *her friend*
WILLMER, *litterateur*
ÖSTERMARK, *a doctor*
MRS. HALL, *his divorced wife*
THE MISSES HALL, *her daughters by a second marriage*
CARI STARCK, *lieutenant*
MRS. STARCK, *his wife*
MAID

The action takes place in Paris at the present day

COMRADES

ACT ONE

An artist's studio in Paris; it is on the ground floor, has glass windows looking out on an orchard. At back of scene a large window and door to hall. On the walls hang studies, canvases, weapons, costumes and plaster casts. To right there is a door leading to AXEL'S room; to left a door leading to BERTHA'S room. There is a model stand left center. To right an easel and painting materials. A large sofa, a large stove through the doors of which one sees a hot coal fire. There is a hanging-lamp from ceiling. At rise of curtain AXEL and DOCTOR ÖSTERMARK are discovered.

Axel. [Sitting, painting.] And you, too, are in Paris!

Dr. Östermark. Everything gathers here as the center of the world; and so you are married—and happy?

Axel. Oh, yes, so, so. Yes, I'm quite happy. That's understood.

Dr. Östermark. What's understood?

Axel. Look here, you're a widower. How was it with your marriage?

Dr. Östermark. Oh, very nice—for her.

Axel. And for you?

Dr. Östermark. So, so! But you see one must compromise, and we compromised to the end.

Axel. What do you mean by compromise?

Dr. Östermark. I mean—that I gave in!

Axel. You?

Dr. Östermark. Yes, you wouldn't think that of a man like me, would you?

Axel. No, I would never have thought that. Look here, don't you believe in woman, eh?

Dr. Östermark. No, sir! I do not. But I love her.

Axel. In your way—yes!

Dr. Östermark. In my way—yes. How about your way?

Axel. We have arranged a sort of comradeship, you see, and friendship is higher and more enduring than love.

Dr. Östermark. H'm—so Bertha paints too. How? Well?

Axel. Fairly well.

Dr. Östermark. We were good friends in the old days, she and I,—that is, we always quarreled a little.—Some visitors. Hush! It is Carl and his wife!

Axel. [Rising.] And Bertha isn't at home! Sacristi! [Enter LIEUTENANT CARL STARCK and his wife.] Welcome! Well, well, we certainly meet here from all corners of the world! How do you do, Mrs. Starck? You're looking well after your journey.

Mrs. Starck. Thanks, dear Axel, we have certainly had a delightful trip. But where is Bertha?

Carl. Yes, where is the young wife?

Axel. She's out at the studio, but she'll be home at any moment now. But won't you sit down?

[The doctor greets the visitors.]

Carl. Hardly. We were passing by and thought we would just look in to see how you are. But we shall be on hand, of course, for your invitation for Saturday, the first of May.

Axel. That's good. You got the card then?

Mrs. Starck. Yes, we received it while we were in Hamburg. Well, what is Bertha doing nowadays?

Axel. Oh, she paints, as I do. In fact, we're expecting her model, and as he may come at any moment, perhaps I can't ask you to sit down after all, if I'm going to be honest.

Carl. Do you think we would blush, then?

Mrs. Starck. He isn't nude, is he?

Axel. Of course.

Carl. A man? The devil!—No, I couldn't allow my wife to be mixed up with anything of that sort. Alone with a naked man!

Axel. I see you still have prejudices, Carl.

Carl. Yes, you know—

Mrs. Starck. Fis!

Dr. Östermark. Yes, that's what I say, too.

Axel. I can't deny that it is not alto-

gether to my taste, but as long as I must have a woman model—

Mrs. Starck. That's another matter.

Axel. Another?

Mrs. Starck. Yes, it is another matter—although it resembles the other, it is not the same. [There is a knock.]

Axel. There he is!

Mrs. Starck. We'll go, then. Good-bye and au revoir. Give my love to Bertha.

Axel. Good-bye, then, as you're so scared. And au revoir.

Carl and Dr. Östermark. Good-bye, Axel.

Carl. [To AXEL.] You stay in here, at least, while—

Axel. No, why should I?

Carl. [Goes shaking his head.] Ugh!

[AXEL alone starts to paint. There is a knock.]

Axel. Come in. [THE MODEL enters.] So, you are back again. Madame hasn't returned yet.

The Model. But it's almost twelve, and I must keep another appointment.

Axel. Is that so? It's too bad, but—h'm—something must have detained her at the studio. How much do I owe you?

The Model. Five francs, as usual.

Axel. [Paying him.] There. Perhaps you'd better wait a while, nevertheless.

The Model. Yes, if I'm needed.

Axel. Yes, be kind enough to wait a few minutes.

[THE MODEL retires behind a screen.

AXEL alone, draws and whistles.

BERTHA comes in after a moment.]

Axel. Hello, my dear! So you're back at last?

Bertha. At last?

Axel. Yes, your model is waiting.

Bertha. [Startled.] No! No! Has he been here again?

Axel. You had engaged him for eleven o'clock.

Bertha. I? No! Did he say that?

Axel. Yes. But I heard you when you made the engagement yesterday.

Bertha. Perhaps it's so, then, but anyway the professor wouldn't let us leave and you know how nervous one gets in the last hours. You're not angry with me, Axel?

Axel. Angry? No. But this is the second time, and he gets his five francs for nothing, nevertheless.

Bertha. Can I help it if the professor keeps us? Why must you always pick on me?

Axel. Do I pick on you?

Bertha. What's that? Didn't you—

Axel. Yes, yes, yes! I picked on you—forgive me—forgive me—for thinking that it was your fault.

Bertha. Well, it's all right then. But what did you pay him with?

Axel. To be sure. Gaga paid back the twenty francs he owed me.

Bertha. [Takes out account-book.] So, he paid you back? Come on, then, and I'll put it down, for the sake of order. It's your money, so of course you can dispose of it as you please, but as you wish me to take care of the accounts—[Writes.] fifteen francs in, five francs out, model. There.

Axel. No. Look here. It's twenty francs in.

Bertha. Yes, but there are only fifteen here.

Axel. Yes, but you should put down twenty.

Bertha. Why do you argue?

Axel. Did I—Well, the man's waiting—

Bertha. Oh, yes. Be good and get things ready for me.

Axel. [Puts model stand in place. Calls to MODEL.] Are you undressed yet?

The Model. [From back of screen.] Soon, monsieur.

Bertha. [Closes door, puts wood in stove.] There, now you must go out.

Axel. [Hesitating.] Bertha!

Bertha. Yes?

Axel. Is it absolutely necessary—with a nude model?

Bertha. Absolutely!

Axel. H'm—indeed!

Bertha. We have certainly argued that matter out.

Axel. Quite true. But it's loathsome nevertheless— [Goes out right.]

Bertha. [Takes up brushes and palette. Calls to MODEL.] Are you ready?

The Model. All ready.

Bertha. Come on, then. [Pause.] Come on. [There is a knock.] Who is it? I have a model.

Willmer. [Outside.] Willmer. With news from the salon.

Bertha. From the salon! [To MODEL.]

Dress yourself! We'll have to postpone the sitting.—Axel! Willmer is here with news from the salon.

[*AXEL comes in, also WILLMER; THE MODEL goes out unnoticed during the following scene.*]

Willmer. Hello, dear friends! Tomorrow the jury will begin its work. Oh, Bertha, here are our pastels. [*Takes package from pocket.*]

Bertha. Thanks, my good Gaga; how much did they cost? They must have been expensive.

Willmer. Oh, not very.

Bertha. So they are to start tomorrow. So soon? Do you hear, Axel?

Axel. Yes, my friend.

Bertha. Now, will you be very good, very, very good?

Axel. I always want to be good to you, my friend.

Bertha. You do? Now, listen. You know Roubey, don't you?

Axel. Yes, I met him in Vienna and we became good friends, as it's called.

Bertha. You know that he is on the jury?

Axel. And then what?

Bertha. Well—now you'll be angry, I know you will.

Axel. You know it? Don't prove it, then.

Bertha. [*Coaxing.*] You wouldn't make a sacrifice for your wife, would you?

Axel. Go begging? No, I don't want to do that.

Bertha. Not for me? You'll get in anyway, but for your wife!

Axel. Don't ask me.

Bertha. I should really never ask you for anything!

Axel. Yes, for things that I can do without sacrificing——

Bertha. Your man's pride!

Axel. Let it go at that.

Bertha. But I would sacrifice my woman's pride if I could help you.

Axel. You women have no pride.

Bertha. Axel!

Axel. Well, well, pardon, pardon!

Bertha. You must be jealous. I don't believe you would really like it if I were accepted at the salon.

Axel. Nothing would make me happier. Believe me, Bertha.

Bertha. Would you be happy, too, if I were accepted and you were refused?

Axel. I must feel and see. [*Puts his hand over his heart.*] No, that would be decidedly disagreeable, decidedly. In the first place, because I paint better than you do, and because——

Bertha. [*Walking up and down.*] Speak out. Because I am a woman!

Axel. Yes, just that. It may seem strange, but to me it's as if you women were intruding and plundering where we have fought for so long while you sat by the fire. Forgive me, Bertha, for talking like this, but such thoughts have occurred to me.

Bertha. Has it ever occurred to you that you're exactly like all other men?

Axel. Like all others? I should hope so!

Bertha. And you have become so superior lately. You didn't use to be like that.

Axel. It must be because I am superior! Doing something that we men have never done before!

Bertha. What! What are you saying! Shame on you!

Willmer. There, there, good friends! No, but, dear friends—Bertha, control yourself. [*He gives her a look which she tries to make out.*]

Bertha. [*Changing.*] Axel, let's be friends! And hear me a moment. Do you think that my position in your house—for it is yours—is agreeable to me? You support me, you pay for my studying at Julian's, while your yourself cannot afford instruction. Don't you think I see how you sit and wear out yourself and your talent on these pot-boiling drawings, and are able to paint only in leisure moments? You haven't been able to afford models for yourself, while you pay mine five hard-earned francs an hour. You don't know how good—how noble—how sacrificing you are, and also you don't know how I suffer to see you toil so for me. Oh, Axel, you can't know how I feel my position. What am I to you? Of what use am I in your house? Oh, I blush when I think about it!

Axel. What, what, what! Aren't you my wife?

Bertha. Yes, but——

Axel. Well, then?

Bertha. But you support me.

Axel. Well, isn't that the right thing to do?

Bertha. It was formerly—according to the old scheme of marriage, but we weren't

to have it like that. We were to be comrades.

Axel. What talk! Isn't a man to support his wife?

Bertha. I don't want it. And you, Axel, you must help me. I'm not your equal when it's like that, but I could be if you would humble yourself once, just once! Don't think that you are alone in going to one of the jury to say a good word for another. If it were for yourself, it would be another matter, but for me—Forgive me! Now I beg of you as nicely as I know how. Lift me from my humiliating position to your side, and I'll be so grateful I shall never trouble you again with reminding you of my position. Never, Axel!

Axel. Don't ask me; you know how weak I am.

Bertha. [*Embracing him.*] Yes, I shall ask you—beg of you, until you fulfil my prayer. Now, don't look so proud, but be human! So! [*Kisses him.*]

Axel. [*To WILLMER.*] Look here, Gaga, don't you think that women are terrible tyrants?

Willmer. [*Pained.*] Yes, and especially when they are submissive.

Bertha. See, now, the sky is clear again. You'll go, won't you, Axel? Get on your black coat now, and go. Then come home, and we'll strike out together for something to eat.

Axel. How do you know that Roubey is receiving now?

Bertha. Don't you think that I made sure of that?

Axel. What a schemer you are!

Bertha. [*Takes a black cutaway coat from wardrobe.*] Well, one would never get anywhere without a little wire-pulling, you know. Here's your black coat. So!

Axel. Yes. But this is awful. What am I to say to the man?

Bertha. H'm. Oh, you'll hit on something on the way. Say that—that—that your wife—no—that you're expecting a christening—

Axel. Fie, Bertha.

Bertha. Well, say that you can get him decorated, then.

Axel. Really you frighten me, Bertha!

Bertha. Say what you please, then. Come, now, and I'll fix your hair so you'll be presentable. Do you know his wife?

Axel. No, not at all.

Bertha. [*Brushing his hair.*] Then you must get an introduction to her. I understand that she has great influence, but that she doesn't like women.

Axel. What are you doing to my hair?

Bertha. I am fixing it as they are wearing it now.

Axel. Yes, but I don't want it that way.

Bertha. Now then—that's fine. Just mind me. [*She goes to a chiffonier and takes out a case which contains a Russian Annae order. She tries to put it in AXEL'S buttonhole.*]

Axel. No, Bertha. You've gone far enough now. I won't wear that decoration.

Bertha. But you accepted it.

Axel. Yes, because I couldn't decline it. But I'll never wear it.

Bertha. Do you belong to some political party that is so liberal-minded as to suppress individual freedom to accept distinctions?

Axel. No, I don't. But I belong to a circle of comrades who have promised each other not to wear their merit on their coats.

Bertha. But who have accepted salon medals!

Axel. Which are not worn on their coats.

Bertha. What do you say to this, Gaga?

Willmer. As long as distinctions exist, one does one's self harm to go about with the mark of infamy, and the example no one is likely to follow. Take them away for all of me—I certainly can't get them away from the others.

Axel. Yes, and when my comrades who are more deserving than I do not wear them, I would lower them by wearing the emblem.

Bertha. But it doesn't show under your overcoat. No one will know, and you won't brand any one.

Willmer. Bertha is right there. You'll wear your order *under* your coat, not *on* your coat.

Axel. Jesuits! When you are given a finger, you take the whole arm.

[*ABEL comes in wearing fur coat and cap.*]

Bertha. Oh, here's Abel! Come on, now, and settle this controversy.

Abel. Hello, Bertha! Hello, Axel! How are you, Gaga? What's the matter?

Bertha. Axel doesn't want to wear his

order, because he daren't on account of his comrades.

Abel. Comrades come before a wife, of course—that's an unwritten law. [*She sits by the table, takes up tobacco and rolls a cigarette.*]

Bertha. [*Fastens ribbon in AXEL'S buttonhole and puts the star back in case.*] He can help me without hurting any one, but I fear he would rather hurt me!

Axel. Bertha, Bertha! But you people will drive me mad! I don't consider it a crime to wear this ribbon, nor have I taken any oath that I wouldn't do so, but at our exhibitions it's considered cowardly not to dare to make one's way without them.

Bertha. Cowardly, of course! But you're not going to take your own course this time—but mine!

Abel. You owe it to the woman who has consecrated her life to you to be her delegate.

Axel. I feel that what you people are saying is false, but I haven't the time or energy to answer you now; but there is an answer! It's as if you were drawing a net about me while I sit absorbed in my work. I can feel the net winding about me, but my foot gets entangled when I want to kick it aside. But, you wait, if only I free my hands, I'll get out my knife and cut the meshes of your net! What were we talking about? Oh, yes, I was going to make a call. Give me my gloves and my overcoat. Good-bye, Bertha! Good-bye. Oh, yes,—where does Roubey live?

Willmer, Abel and Bertha. [*In unison.*] Sixty-five Rue des Martyrs.

Axel. Why, that's right near here!

Bertha. Just at the corner. Thanks, Axel, for going. Does the sacrifice feel very heavy?

Axel. I can't feel anything but that I am tired of all this talk and that it will be delightful to get out. Good-bye.

[*Goes out.*]

Abel. It's too bad about Axel. It's a pity. Did you know that he is refused?

Bertha. And I, then?

Abel. That's not settled yet. As you wrote your own name with French spelling, you won't be reached until O.

Bertha. There's still hope for me?

Abel. Yes, for you, but not for Axel.

Willmer. Now, we'll see something!

Bertha. How do you know that he is refused?

Abel. H'm, I met a "hors concours" who knew, and I was quite prepared to witness a scene when I came in here. But of course he hasn't received the notice yet.

Bertha. No, not that I know of. But, Abel, are you sure that Axel will meet Madame Roubey and not Monsieur?

Abel. What should he see Monsieur Roubey for? He hasn't any say about it, but she is president of the Woman-Painters Protective Society.

Bertha. And I am not refused—yet?

Abel. No, as I said, and Axel's call is bound to do good. He has a Russian order, and everything Russian is very popular in Paris just now. But it's too bad about Axel just the same.

Bertha. Too bad? Why? They haven't room for everybody on the salon walls. There are so many women refused that a man might put up with it and be made to feel it for once. But if I get in now—we'll soon hear how *he* painted my picture, how *he* has taught me, how *he* has paid for my lessons. But I shall not take any notice of that, because it isn't true.

Willmer. Well, we're bound to see something unusual happen now.

Bertha. No, I believe—granted that I am not refused—that we'll see something very usual. But nevertheless I'm afraid of the actual moment. Something tells me that things won't be right between Axel and me again.

Abel. And it was just when you were equals that things were going to be right

Willmer. It seems to me that your position will be much more clearly defined and much pleasanter when you can sell your pictures and support yourself.

Bertha. It should be! We'll see—we'll see! [*The maid enters with a green letter.*] A green letter for Axel! Here it is! Here it is! He is refused! Yes, but this is terrible; however, it will be a consolation to me if I should be refused.

Abel. But if you are not refused?

Bertha. [*Pause.*]

Abel. You won't answer that?

Bertha. No, I won't answer that.

Abel. Because, if you are accepted, the equality will be destroyed, as you will be his superior.

Bertha. Superior? A wife superior to her husband—her husband—oh!

Willmer. It's about time an example was made.

Abel. [To *BERTHA.*] You were at the luncheon today? Was it interesting?

Bertha. Oh, yes.

Willmer. When are you going to review my book, Abel?

Abel. I'm just working on it.

Willmer. Are you going to be nice to me?

Abel. Very nice.—Well, *Bertha*, how and when will you deliver the letter?

Bertha. [Walking about.] That is just what I am thinking about. If he hasn't met Madame Roubey, and if he hasn't carried out our plan, he will hardly do it after receiving this blow.

Abel. [Rising.] I don't think Axel is so base as to revenge himself on you.

Bertha. Base? Such talk! Didn't he go just now when I wanted him to, because I am his wife? Do you think he would ever have gone for any one else?

Abel. Would you like it if he had done it for some one else?

Bertha. Good-bye to you—you must go now, before he returns!

Abel. That's what I think. Good-bye, *Bertha*.

Willmer. Yes, we had better get away. Good-bye for now.

[The MAID enters and announces
MRS. HALL.]

Bertha. Who? Mrs. Hall? Who can that be?

Abel and Willmer. Good-bye, *Bertha*.

[They go out. MRS. HALL comes in. She is flashily though carelessly dressed. She looks like an adventuress.]

Mrs. Hall. I don't know that I have the honor to be known to you, but you are Mrs. Alberg, née Alund, are you not?

Bertha. Yes, I'm Mrs. Alberg. Won't you sit down?

Mrs. Hall. My name is Hall. [Sits.] Oh, my lord, but I'm so tired! I have walked up so many stairs—oh-ho-ho-ho, I believe I'll faint!

Bertha. How can I be of service to you?

Mrs. Hall. You know Doctor Östermark, don't you?

Bertha. Yes, he's an old friend of mine.

Mrs. Hall. An old friend. Well, you see,

dear Mrs. Alberg, I was married to him once, but we separated. I am his divorced wife.

Bertha. Oh! He has never told me about that.

Mrs. Hall. Oh, people don't tell such things.

Bertha. He told me he was a widower.

Mrs. Hall. Well, you were a young girl then, and I suppose he isn't so anxious to have it known anyway.

Bertha. And I who have always believed that Doctor Östermark was an honorable man!

Mrs. Hall. [Sarcastic.] Yes, he's a good one! He is a real gentleman, I must say.

Bertha. Well, but why do you tell me all this?

Mrs. Hall. Just wait, my dear Mrs. Alberg—wait and you shall hear. You are a member of the society, aren't you?

Bertha. Yes, I am.

Mrs. Hall. Just so; only wait now.

Bertha. Did you have any children?

Mrs. Hall. Two—two daughters, Mrs. Alberg.

Bertha. That's another matter! And he left you in want?

Mrs. Hall. Just wait now! He gave us a small allowance, not enough for the rent even. And now that the girls are grown up and about to start in life, now he writes us that he is a bankrupt and that he can't send us more than half the allowance. Isn't that nice, just now, when the girls are grown up and are going out into life?

Bertha. We must look into this. He'll be here in a few days. Do you know that you have the law on your side and that the courts can force him to pay? And he shall be forced to do so. Do you understand? So, he can bring children into the world and then leave them empty-handed with the poor, deserted mother. Oh, he'll find out something very different! Will you give me your address?

Mrs. Hall. [Gives her card.] You are so good, Mrs. Alberg. And you won't be vexed with me if I ask a little favor of you?

Bertha. You can depend on me entirely. I shall write the secretary immediately—

Mrs. Hall. Oh, you're so good, but before the secretary can answer, I and my poor children will probably be thrown out into the street. Dear Mrs. Alberg, you couldn't

lend me a trifle—just wait—a trifle of twenty francs?

Bertha. No, dear lady, I haven't any money. My husband supports me for the time being, and you may be sure that I'm reminded of the fact. It's bitter to eat the bread of charity when one is young, but better times are coming for me too.

Mrs. Hall. My dear, good Mrs. Alberg, you must not refuse me. If you do, I am a lost woman. Help me, for heaven's sake.

Bertha. Are you terribly in need?

Mrs. Hall. And you ask me that!

Bertha. I'll let you have this money as a loan. [*She goes to chiffonier.*] Twenty, forty, sixty, eighty—lacking twenty. What did I do with it? H'm luncheon, of course! [*She writes in account-book.*] Paints twenty, incidentals twenty—there you are.

Mrs. Hall. Thank you, my good Mrs. Alberg, thanks, dear lady.

Bertha. There, there. But I can't give you any more time today. So, good-bye, and depend on me.

Mrs. Hall. [*Uncertain.*] Just a moment now.

Bertha. [*Listening without.*] No, you must go now.

Mrs. Hall. Just a moment. What was I going to say?—Well, it doesn't matter.

[*Goes out. BERTHA is alone for a moment, when she hears AXEL coming. She hides the green letter in her pocket.*]

Bertha. Back already? Well, did you meet her—him?

Axel. I didn't meet him, but her, which was much better. I congratulate you, Bertha. Your picture is already accepted!

Bertha. Oh, no! What are you saying? And yours?

Axel. It isn't decided yet—but it will surely go through, too.

Bertha. Are you sure of that?

Axel. Of course—

Bertha. Oh, I'm accepted! Good, how good! But why don't you congratulate me?

Axel. Haven't I? I'm quite sure that I said, "I congratulate you!" For that matter, one mustn't sell the skin before the bear is killed. To get into the salon isn't anything. It's just a toss-up. It can even depend on what letter one's name begins with. You come in O, as you spelled

your name in French. When the lettering starts with M it's always easier.

Bertha. So, you wish to say that perhaps I got in because my name begins with O?

Axel. Not on account of that alone.

Bertha. And if you are refused, it's because your name begins with A.

Axel. Not exactly that alone, but it might be on that account.

Bertha. Look here, I don't think you're as honorable as you would seem. You are jealous.

Axel. Why should I be, when I don't know what has happened to me yet?

Bertha. But when you do know?

Axel. What? [*BERTHA takes out letter. AXEL puts his hand to his heart and sits in a chair.*] What! [*Controls himself.*] That was a blow I had not expected. That was most disagreeable!

Bertha. Well, I suppose I'll have to help you now.

Axel. You seem to be filled with malicious delight, Bertha. Oh, I feel that a great hate is beginning to grow in here. [*Indicating his breast.*]

Bertha. Perhaps I look delighted because I've had a success, but when one is tied to a man who cannot rejoice in another's good fortune, it's difficult to sympathize with his misfortune.

Axel. I don't know why, but it seems as if we had become enemies now. The strife of position has come between us, and we can never be friends any more.

Bertha. Can't your sense of justice bend and recognize me as the abler, the victorious one in the strife?

Axel. You are not the abler.

Bertha. The jury must have thought so, however.

Axel. But surely you know that I paint better than you do.

Bertha. Are you so sure of that?

Axel. Yes, I am. But for that matter—you worked under better conditions than I. You didn't have to do any pot-boiling, you could go to the studio, you had models, and you were a woman!

Bertha. Yes, now I'll hear how I have lived on you—

Axel. Between ourselves, yes, but the world won't know unless you go and tell it yourself.

Bertha. Oh, the world knows that already.

But tell me, why don't you suffer when a comrade, a man comrade, is accepted, although he has less merit than you?

Axel. I'll have to think about that. You see our feeling toward you women has never been critical—we've taken you as a matter of course, and so I've never thought about our relations as against each other. Now when the shoe pinches, it strikes me that we are not comrades, for this experience makes me feel that you women do not belong here. [*Indicating the studio.*] A comrade is a more or less loyal competitor; we are enemies. You women have been lying down in the rear while we attacked the enemy. And now, when we have set and supplied the table, you pounce down upon it as if you were in your own home!

Bertha. Oh, fie, have we ever been allowed in the conflict?

Axel. You have always been allowed, but you have never wanted to take part, or haven't been able to do so in our domain, where you are now breaking in. Technique had to be put through its whole development and completion by us before you entered. And now you buy the centurions' work for ten francs an hour in a studio, and with money that we have acquired by our work.

Bertha. You are not honorable now, Axel.

Axel. When was I honorable? When I allowed you to use me like an old shoe? But now you are my superior—and now I can't strive to be honorable any longer. Do you know that this adversity will also change our economic relations? I cannot think of painting any more, but must give up my life's dream and become a pot-boiler in earnest.

Bertha. You needn't do that; when I can sell, I will support myself.

Axel. For that matter, what sort of an alliance have we gone into? Marriage should be built on common interests; ours is built on opposing interests.

Bertha. You can work all that out by yourself; I'm going out for dinner now,—are you coming.

Axel. No, I want to be alone with my unhappiness.

Bertha. And I want company for my happiness.—But we have invited people to come here for the evening—that won't do now, with your misery, will it?

Axel. It isn't a very brilliant prospect, but there's no way out. Let them come.

Bertha. [*Dressing to go out.*] But you must be here, or it will look as if you were cowardly.

Axel. I'll be with you, don't worry—but give me a bit of money before you go.

Bertha. We've reached the end of our cash.

Axel. The end?

Bertha. Yes, money comes to an end too!

Axel. Can you lend me ten francs?

Bertha. [*Taking out pocketbook.*] Ten francs? Yes, indeed, if I have it. Here you are. Won't you come along? Tell me. They'll think it rather strange!

Axel. And play the defeated lion before the triumphant chariot? No, indeed, I'll need my time to learn my part for this evening's performance.

Bertha. Good-bye then.

Axel. Good-bye, Bertha. Let me ask you one thing.

Bertha. What then?

Axel. Don't come home intoxicated. It would be more disagreeable today than ever.

Bertha. Does it concern you how I come home?

Axel. Well, I feel sort of responsible for you, as for a relative, considering that you bear the same name that I do, and besides, it is still disgusting to me to see a woman intoxicated.

Bertha. Why is it any more disgusting than to see a man intoxicated?

Axel. Yes, why? Perhaps because you don't bear being seen without a disguise.

Bertha. [*Starting.*] Good-bye, you old talking-machine. You won't come along?

Axel. No!

[*BERTHA goes out; AXEL rises, takes off his cutaway to change it for working coat.*]

ACT TWO

Same scene as Act One, but there is a large table with chairs around it in middle of scene. On table there is writing material and a speaker's gavel. AXEL is painting. ABEL is sitting near him. She is smoking.

Azel. They have finished dinner and are having their coffee now. Did they drink much?

Abel. Oh, yes, and Bertha bragged and was disagreeable.

Azel. Tell me one thing, Abel, are you my friend, or not?

Abel. H'm—I don't know.

Azel. Can I trust you?

Abel. No—you can't.

Azel. Why not?

Abel. Oh, I just feel that you can't.

Azel. Tell me, Abel, you who have the common sense of a man and can be reasoned with, tell me how it feels to be a woman. Is it so awful?

Abel. [*Jokingly.*] Yes, of course. It feels like being a nigger.

Azel. That's strange. Listen, Abel. You know that I have a passion for equity and justice—

Abel. I know you are a visionary—and that's why things will never go well with you.

Azel. But things go well with you—because you never feel anything?

Abel. Yes.

Azel. Abel, have you really never had any desire to love a man?

Abel. How silly you are!

Azel. Have you never found anyone?

Abel. No, men are very scarce.

Azel. H'm, don't you consider me a man?

Abel. You! No!

Azel. That's what I fancied myself to be.

Abel. Are you a man? You, who work for a woman and go around dressed like a woman?

Azel. What? I, dressed like a woman?

Abel. The way you wear your hair and go around bare-necked, while she wears stiff collars and short hair; be careful, she'll soon take your trousers away from you.

Azel. How you talk!

Abel. And what is your position in your own house? You beg money from her, and she puts you under her guardianship. No, you are not a man! But that's why she took you, when her affairs were in bad shape.

Azel. You hate Bertha; what have you against her?

Abel. I don't know, but perhaps I, too, have been struck with that same passion for justice.

Azel. Look here. Don't you believe in your great cause any longer?

Abel. Sometimes! Sometimes not! What can one believe in any more? Sometimes it strikes me that the old ways were better. As mothers we had an honored and respected position when in that way we fulfilled our duty as citizens; as housewives we were a great power, and to bring up a family was not an ignominious occupation. Give me a cognac, Azel. We have talked so much.

Azel. [*Getting cognac.*] Why do you drink?

Abel. I don't know. If one could only find the exceptional man!

Azel. What sort would that be?

Abel. The man who rules a woman!

Azel. Well, and if you found one?

Abel. Then I would—as they say—fall in love with him. Think if this whole noise were *blague*. Think!

Azel. No, there is surely life, motion in the movement, whatever it is.

Abel. Yes, there's so much motion—forward and backward! And a good deal of folly can come of the "motion," if they only get the majority for it.

Azel. If it turns out that way, then you've made a damned lot of noise uselessly, for now it's beginning to be loathsome to live.

Abel. We make so much noise that we make your heads reel. That's the trouble! Well, Azel, your position will be freer now that Bertha has been able to sell.

Azel. Sell! Has she sold a picture?

Abel. Don't you know that? The small picture with the apple-tree.

Azel. No, she hasn't said anything about it. When did it happen?

Abel. Day before yesterday. Don't you know about it? Well, then she intends to surprise you with the money.

Azel. Surprise me? She takes care of the cash herself.

Abel. So! Then it will—Hush, she is coming. [*BERTHA comes in.*]

Bertha. [*To ABEL.*] Oh, good evening; are you here? What made you leave us?

Abel. I thought it was tiresome.

Bertha. Yes, there is no fun in rejoicing for others!

Abel. No!

Bertha. [*To AZEL.*] And you sit dilligently niggling, I see.

Axel. Yes, I'm daubing away.

Bertha. Let me see! That's very good indeed—but the left arm is far too long.

Axel. Do you think so?

Bertha. Think so? Can't I see that it is? Give me the brush and—*[She takes brush.]*

Axel. No, let me alone. Aren't you ashamed?

Bertha. What's that?

Axel. *[Vexed.]* Shame, I said. *[Rises.]* Are you trying to teach me how to paint?

Bertha. Why not?

Axel. Because you have still much to learn from me. But I can learn nothing from you.

Bertha. It seems to me that the gentleman is not very respectful to his wife. One should bear in mind the respect one owes to —

Abel. Now you're old-fashioned. What particular respect does a man owe a woman if they are to be equals?

Bertha. *[To ABEL.]* So you think it's all right for a man to be coarse with his wife?

Abel. Yes, when she is impudent to him.

Axel. That's right! Tear each other's eyes out!

Abel. Not at all! The whole thing is too insignificant for that.

Axel. Don't say that. Look here, Bertha, considering that our economic condition is to undergo a change from now on, won't you be so good as to let me see the account-book?

Bertha. What a noble revenge for being refused!

Axel. What revenge? What has the account-book got to do with my being turned down at the salon? Give me the key to the chiffonier.

Bertha. *[Feeling in her pocket.]* Very well. H'm! That's strange! I thought I just had it.

Axel. Find it!

Bertha. You speak in such a commanding tone. I don't like that.

Axel. Come now, find the key.

Bertha. *[Looking here and there in the room.]* Yes, but I can't understand it; I can't find it. It must be lost some way.

Axel. Are you sure that you haven't got it?

Bertha. Absolutely sure.

[AXEL rings; after a moment the MAID comes in.]

Axel. *[To MAID.]* Go fetch a locksmith.
Maid. A locksmith?

Axel. Yes, a smith who can pick a lock.
[BERTHA gives the MAID a look.]

Maid. Right away, monsieur.

[MAID goes out. AXEL changes his coat, discovers the order on the lapel, tears it off and throws it on the table.]

Axel. Pardon me, ladies!

Bertha. *[Mildly.]* Don't mind us. Are you going out?

Axel. I am going out.

Bertha. Aren't you going to stay for the meeting?

Axel. No, I am not!

Bertha. Yes, but they will think that very discourteous.

Axel. Let them. I have more important things to do than listening to the drivel of you women.

Bertha. *[Worried.]* Where are you going?

Axel. I don't need to account for myself, as I don't ask you to account for your actions.

Bertha. You won't forget that we have invited guests for the masquerade tomorrow evening?

Axel. Guests? That's true, tomorrow evening. H'm!

Bertha. It won't do to postpone it when both Östermark and Carl have arrived to-day, and I have asked them to come.

Axel. So much the better!

Bertha. And now come home early enough to try on your costume.

Axel. My costume? Yes, of course; I am to take the part of a woman.

[The MAID enters.]

Maid. The smith hasn't time now but he'll come within two hours.

Axel. He hasn't time, eh? Well, perhaps the key will turn up anyway. However, I must be off now. Good-bye.

Bertha. *[Very mild.]* Good-bye then. Don't come home late.

Axel. I don't know just what I will do. Good-bye.

[ABEL nods good-bye, AXEL goes out.]

Abel. How very cocky his lordship was!

Bertha. Such impudence! Do you know, I had a good mind to tame him, break him so that he'd come back crawling to me.

Abel. Yes, that tweak the salon disap-

pointment gave him doesn't seem to have taken all the spunk out of him. Bertha, tell me, have you ever loved that clown?

Bertha. Loved him? I liked him very much because he was nice to me. But he is so silly and—when he nags as he did just now, I feel that I could hate him. Think of it, it's already around that he painted my picture!

Abel. Well, if it's gone as far as that, then you must do something éclatant.

Bertha. If I only knew how!

Abel. I'm usually inventive. Let me see. Look here, why couldn't you have his refused picture brought home just as all your friends have gathered here?

Bertha. No, that would look as if I wanted to triumph. No, that would be too terrible.

Abel. Yes, but if I should have it done? Or Gaga, that would be better still. It would be sent here in Axel's name by the porter. It's got to come home anyway, and it's no secret that it was refused.

Bertha. No, but you know——

Abel. What? Hasn't he spread false reports, and haven't you the right to defend yourself?

Bertha. I would like it to happen very much, but I don't want to have anything to do with the doing of it. I want to be able to stand and swear that I am quite clean and innocent.

Abel. You shall be able to do so. I'll attend to it.

Bertha. What do you think he wanted the account-book for? He has never asked to do with the doing of it. I want to be able to stand and swear that I am quite clean and innocent.

Abel. Ye-es! Doubtless. He wants to see if you've accounted for the three hundred francs you got for your picture.

Bertha. What picture?

Abel. The one you sold to Madame Roubey.

Bertha. How do you know about that?

Abel. The whole crowd knows about it.

Bertha. And Axel, too?

Abel. Yes. I happened to mention it because I thought he knew. It was stupid of you not to tell him.

Bertha. Does it concern him if I sell a——

Abel. Yes, in a way, of course it concerns him.

Bertha. Well, then, I will explain that I didn't want to give him another disappointment after he had already had the unhappiness of seeing me accepted at the salon.

Abel. Strictly speaking, he has nothing to do with your earnings, as you have a marriage compact, and you have every reason to be tight with him. Just to establish a precedent, buck up and stand your own ground when he returns with his lecture tonight.

Bertha. Oh, I know how to take care of him. But—another matter. How are we to treat the Östermark case?

Abel. Östermark—yes, he is my great enemy. You had better let me take care of him. We have an old account that is still unsettled, he and I. Calm yourself on that score. I'll make him yield, for we have the law on our side.

Bertha. What do you intend to do?

Abel. Invite Mrs. Hall and her two daughters here for tomorrow night, and then we will find out how he takes it.

Bertha. No, indeed, no scandal in my house!

Abel. Why not? Can you deny yourself such a triumph? If it's war, one must kill one's enemies, not just wound them. And now it is war. Am I right?

Bertha. Yes, but a father, and his wife and daughters whom he has not seen for eighteen years!

Abel. Well, he'll have a chance to see them now.

Bertha. You're terrible, Abel!

Abel. I'm a little stronger than you, that's all. Marriage must have softened you. Do you live as married people, h'm?

Bertha. How foolish you are!

Abel. You have irritated Axel; you have trampled on him. But he can yet bite your heel.

Bertha. Do you think he would dare to do anything?

Abel. I believe he'll create a scene when he comes home.

Bertha. Well, I shall give him as good as he sends——

Abel. If you only can! But that business about the chiffonier key—that was foolish, very foolish.

Bertha. Perhaps it was foolish. But he

will be nice enough again after he has had an airing. I know him.

[*The MAID comes in with a package.*]

Maid. A messenger brought this costume for monsieur.

Bertha. Very well, let me have it. That's fine!

Maid. But it must be for madame, as it's a lady's costume.

Bertha. No, that's all right. It's for monsieur.

Maid. But, heavens! is monsieur to wear dresses too?

Bertha. Why not, when we have to wear them? But you may leave us now.

[*MAID goes out. BERTHA opens bundle and takes out Spanish costume.*]

Abel. But that is certainly well thought out. Oh, it's beautiful to avenge anyone's stupidities.

[*WILLMER comes in with a messenger, who carries a package.*]

WILLMER is dressed in black frock coat with lapels faced with white, a flower in buttonhole, knee breeches, red cravat, and turned over cuffs.

Willmer. Good evening; are you alone? Here are the candles and here are the bottles. One chartreuse and two vermouth; here are two packages of tobacco and the rest of the things.

Bertha. Well, but you are a good boy, Gaga!

Willmer. And here is the receipted bill.

Bertha. Is it paid? Then you have spent money again?

Willmer. We'll have plenty of time to settle that. But you must hurry now, as the old lady will soon be here.

Bertha. Then be good enough to open the bottles while I fix the candles.

Willmer. Of course I will.

[*BERTHA opens package of candles at table; WILLMER stands beside her, taking the wrappers from bottles.*]

Abel. You look quite family-like as you stand there together. You might have made quite a nice little husband, Gaga.

[*WILLMER puts his arm around BERTHA and kisses her on the neck. BERTHA turns on WILLMER and slaps his face.*]

Bertha. Aren't you ashamed, you little hornet! What are you up to, anyway?

Abel. If you can stand that, Gaga, then you can stand the knife.

Willmer. [*Angry.*] Little hornet? Don't you know who I am? Don't you know that I'm an author of rank?

Bertha. You! who write nothing but trash!

Willmer. It wasn't trash when I wrote for you.

Bertha. You only copied what we said, that was all!

Willmer. Take care, Bertha. You know that I can ruin you!

Bertha. So, you threaten, you little Fido! [*To ABEL.*] Shall we give the boy a spanking?

Abel. Think what you are saying!

Willmer. So! I've been a little Fido, who has been lying on your skirt; but don't forget that I can bite too.

Bertha. Let me see your teeth!

Willmer. No, but you shall feel them!

Bertha. Very well, come on then! Come!

Abel. Now, now, be quiet before you go too far.

Willmer. [*To BERTHA.*] Do you know what one has a right to say about a married woman who accepts presents from a young bachelor?

Bertha. Presents?

Willmer. You've accepted presents from me for two years.

Bertha. Presents! You should have a thrashing, you lying little snipe, always hanging around the petticoats! Don't you suppose I can squeeze you?

Willmer. [*With a shrug.*] Perhaps.

Bertha. And you dare throw a shadow on a woman's honor!

Willmer. Honor! H'm! Does it do you any honor to have had me buy part of the household things which you have charged up to your husband?

Bertha. Leave my house, you scamp!

Willmer. Your house! Among comrades one is not careful, but among enemies one must count every hair! And you shall be compelled to go over the accounts with me—adventuress—depend on that! [*Goes out.*]

Abel. You will suffer for this foolishness! To let a friend leave you as an enemy—that's dangerous.

Bertha. Oh, let him do what he likes.

He dared to kiss me! He dared to remind me that I'm a woman.

Abel. Do you know, I believe a man will always have that in mind. You have been playing with fire.

Bertha. Fire! Can one ever find a man and a woman who can live like comrades without danger of fire?

Abel. No, I don't think so; as long as there are two sexes there is bound to be fire.

Bertha. Yes, but that must be done away with!

Abel. Yes—it must be—try it!

[*The MAID comes in; she is bursting with laughter.*]

Maid. There is a lady out here who calls herself—Richard—Richard Wahlström!

Bertha. [*Going toward door.*] Oh! Richard is here.

Abel. Oh, well then, if she has come, we can open the meeting. And now to see if we can disentangle your skein.

Bertha. Disentangle it, or cut it!

Abel. Or get caught in it!

ACT THREE

Same scene. The hanging-lamp is lighted. Moonlight streams in, lighting up the studio window. There is a fire in the stove. BERTHA and the MAID are discovered. BERTHA is dressed in a negligée with lace. She is sewing on the Spanish costume. The MAID is cutting out a frill.

Bertha. There's no fun sitting up waiting for one's husband.

Maid. Do you think it is more fun for him to sit and wait for madame? This is the first time that he has been out alone——

Bertha. Well, what does he do when he sits here alone?

Maid. He paints on pieces of wood.

Bertha. On wooden panels?

Maid. Yes, he has big piles of wood that he paints on.

Bertha. H'm! Tell me one thing, Ida; has monsieur ever been familiar with you?

Maid. Oh, never! No, he is such a proper gentleman.

Bertha. Are you sure?

Maid. [*Positive.*] Does madame think that I am such a——

Bertha.—What time is it now?

Maid. It must be along toward twelve.

Bertha. Very well. Then you may go to bed.

Maid. Won't you be afraid to be alone with all these skeletons?

Bertha. I, afraid?—Hush, someone is coming through the gate—so, good night to you.

Maid. Good night, Madame. Sleep well.

[*Goes out. BERTHA alone; she puts the work away; throws herself on the couch, arranges lace on her gown, then she jumps up, turns down the lamp to half-light, then returns to couch and pretends to sleep. A pause before AXEL enters.*]

Axel. Is anyone here? Are you here, Bertha? [*BERTHA is silent. AXEL goes to her.*] Are you asleep?

Bertha. [*Softly.*] Ah, is it you, my friend? Good evening! I was lying here and fell asleep, and I had such a bad dream.

Axel. Now you are lying, for I saw you thro' the window from the garden when you took this pose. [*BERTHA jumps up.*]

Axel. [*Quietly.*] And we don't want any seductive scenes in nightgowns, nor any melodramas. Be calm and listen to what I am going to tell you.

[*He sits down in the middle of the room.*]

Bertha. What have you got to tell me?

Axel. A whole lot of things; but I shall begin with the ending. We must dissolve this concubinage.

Bertha. What? [*Throwing herself on the couch.*] Oh, my God, what am I not made to live through!

Axel. No hysteria, or I will empty the water bottle on your laces!

Bertha. This is your revenge because I defeated you in an open competition!

Axel. That has no connection with this matter.

Bertha. You have never loved me!

Axel. Yes, I have loved you; that was my only motive for marrying you. But why did you marry me? Because you were hard up, and because you had green sickness!

Bertha. It's fortunate that no one can hear us.

Axel. It would be no misfortune if anyone did hear us. I've treated you like a

comrade, with unlimited trust, and I've even made small sacrifices that you know about.—Has the locksmith been here yet?

Bertha. No, he didn't come.

Axel. It doesn't matter—I have looked over your accounts.

Bertha. So, you've been spying in my book, have you?

Axel. The household account-book is common property. You have entered false expenses and neglected to put down some of the income.

Bertha. Can I help it if we are not taught bookkeeping at school?

Axel. Nor are we. And as far as your bringing-up is concerned, you had things much better than I did; you went to a seminary, but I only went to a grade school.

Bertha. It's not books that bring one up—

Axel. No, it's the parents! But it's strange that they can't teach their daughters to be honorable—

Bertha. Honorable! I wonder if the majority of criminals are not to be found among men?

Axel. The majority of the punished, you should say; but of ninety-nine per cent. of criminal men one can ask with the judge, "Où est la femme?" But—to return to you. You have lied to me all the way through, and finally you have cheated me. For instance, you put down twenty francs for paints instead of for a twenty-franc luncheon at Marguery.

Bertha. That's not true; the luncheon only cost twelve francs.

Axel. That is to say, you put eight in your pocket. Then you have received three hundred francs for the picture that you sold.

BERTHA. "What a woman earns by her work, she also controls." That's what the law states.

Axel. That's not a paradox, then? Not monomania?

Bertha. No, it seems not.

Axel. Of course, we must not be petty; you control your earnings, and have controlled mine, in an unspeakable way; still, don't you think that, as comrades, you should have told me about the sale?

Bertha. That didn't concern you.

Axel. It didn't concern me? Well, then

it only remains for me to bring suit for divorce.

Bertha. Divorce! Do you think I would stand the disgrace of being a divorced wife? Do you think that I will allow myself to be driven from my home, like a servant-maid who is sent away with her trunk?

Axel. I could throw you out into the street if I wished, but I shall do a more humane thing and get the divorce on the grounds of incompatibility of temperament.

Bertha. If you can talk like that, you have never loved me!

Axel. Tell me, why do you think I asked for your hand?

Bertha. Because you wanted me to love you.

Axel. Oh, holy, revered, uncorruptible stupidity—yes! I could accuse you of counterfeiting, for you have gone into debt to Willmer and made me responsible for the amount.

Bertha. Ah, the little insect! he has been talking, has he?

Axel. I just left him after paying him the three hundred and fifty francs for which you were indebted to him. But we mustn't be small about money matters, and we have more serious business to settle. You have allowed this scoundrel partially to pay for my household, and in doing so you have completely ruined my reputation. What have you done with the money?

Bertha. The whole thing is a lie.

Axel. Have you squandered it on luncheon and dinner parties?

Bertha. No, I have saved it; and that's something you have no conception of, spendthrift!

Axel. Oh, you saving soul! That negligée cost two hundred francs, and my dressing-gown cost twenty-five.

Bertha. Have you anything else to say to me?

Axel. Nothing else, except that you must think about supporting yourself from now on. I don't care to decorate wooden panels any more and let you reap the earnings.

Bertha. A-ha, you think you can so easily get out of the duty that you made yourself responsible for when you fooled me into becoming your wife? You shall see!

Axel. Now that I've had my eyes opened,

the past is beginning to take on another color. It seems to me almost as if you conjured that courtship of ours; it seems almost as if I had been the victim of what you women call seduction; it now seems to me as if I had fallen into the hands of an adventuress, who lured my money away from me in a *hôtel garni*; it seems almost as if I had lived in vice ever since I was united with you! [*Rising.*] And now, as you stand there with your back turned to me and I see your neck with your short hair, it is—yes, it is exactly as if—ugh!—as if you were Judith and had given your body to be able to behead me! Look, there is the dress I was going to wear, that you wished to humiliate me with. Yes, you felt that it was debasing to wear those things, and thought it disguised your desire to irritate, —this low-cut bodice and the corsets which were to advertise your woman's wares. No, I return your love-token and shake off the fetters. [*He throws down the wedding-ring.* BERTHA looks at him in wonderment. AXEL pushes back his hair.] You didn't want to see that my forehead is higher than yours, so I let my hair conceal it, so as not to humble and frighten you. But now I am going to humble you, and since you were not willing to be my equal when I lowered myself to your level, you shall be my inferior, which you are.

Bertha. And all this—all this noble revenge because *you* were *my* inferior!

Axel. Yes, I was your inferior, even when I painted your picture!

Bertha. Did you paint my picture? If you repeat that, I'll strike you.

Axel. Yes, your kind, who despise raw strength, are always the first to resort to it. Go ahead and strike.

Bertha. [*Advancing.*] Don't you think I can measure strength with you?

[AXEL takes both her wrists in one hand.]

Axel. No, I don't think so. Are you convinced now that I am also your physical superior? Bend, or I'll break you!

Bertha. Do you dare strike me?

Axel. Why not? I know of only one reason why I should not strike you.

Bertha. What's that?

Axel. Because you are morally irresponsible.

Bertha. [*Trying to free herself.*] Let go!

Axel. When you have begged for forgiveness! So, down on your knees. [*He forces her down with one hand.*] There, now look up to me, from below! That's your place, that you yourself have chosen.

Bertha. [*Giving in.*] Axel, Axel, I don't know you any more. Are you he who swore to love me, who begged to carry me, to lift me?

Axel. It is I. I was strong then, and believed I had the power to do it; but you sapped my strength while my tired head lay in your lap, you sucked my best blood while I slept—and still there was enough left to subdue you. But get up and let us end this declaiming. We have business to talk over! [BERTHA rises, sits on couch and weeps.] Why are you crying?

Bertha. I don't know! Because I'm weak, perhaps.

[BERTHA's attitude and actions are those of complete surrender.]

Axel. You see—I was your strength. When I took what was mine, you had nothing left. You were a rubber ball that I blew up; when I let go of you, you fell together like an empty bag.

Bertha. [*Without looking up.*] I don't know whether you are right or not, but since we have quarreled, my strength has left me. Axel, will you believe me,—I have never experienced before what I now feel

Axel. So? What do you feel, then?

Bertha. I can't say it! I don't know whether it is—love, but —

Axel. What do you mean by love? Isn't it a quiet longing to eat me alive once more? You begin to love me! Why didn't you do that before, when I was good to you? Goodness is stupidity, though; let us be evil! Isn't that right?

Bertha. Be a little evil, rather, but don't be weak. [*Rises.*] Axel, forgive me, but don't desert me. Love me! Oh, love me!

Axel. It is too late! Yesterday, this morning, I would have fallen before you as you stand there now, but it's too late now.

Bertha. Why is it too late now?

Axel. Because tonight I have broken all ties, even the last.

Bertha. [*Taking his hands.*] What do you mean?

Axel. I have been untrue to you.

Bertha. [*Falls in a heap.*] Oh!

Axel. It was the only way to tear myself loose.

Bertha. [*Collecting herself.*] Who was she?

Axel. A woman—— [*Pause.*]

Bertha. How did she look?

Axel. Like a woman! With long hair and high breasts, et cetera.— Spare yourself.

Bertha. Do you think I am jealous of one of that kind?

Axel. One of that kind, two of that kind, many of that kind!

Bertha. [*Gasping.*] And tomorrow our friends are invited here! Do you want to create a scandal and call in the invitations?

Axel. No, I don't want to be mean in my revenge. Tomorrow we'll have our friends, and the day after our ways will part.

Bertha. Yes, our ways must part now. Good night! [*Goes to door left.*]

Axel. [*Going to door right.*] Good night!

Bertha. [*Stops.*] Axel!

Axel. Yes?

Bertha. Oh, it wasn't anything!—Yes, wait. [*Goes toward AXEL with clasped hands.*] Love me, Axel! Love me!

Axel. Would you share with another?

Bertha. [*Pause.*] If only you loved me!

Axel. No, I cannot. You can't draw me to you as you used to do.

Bertha. Love me, be merciful! I am honest now, I believe, otherwise I would never humiliate myself as—as I am doing now, before a man.

Axel. Even if I had compassion for you, I cannot call forth any love. It has come to an end. It is dead.

Bertha. I beg for a man's love, I, a woman, and he shoves me away from him!

Axel. Why not? We should also have leave to say no for once, although we are not always very hard to please.

Bertha. A woman offers herself to a man and is refused!

Axel. Feel now how millions have felt, when they have begged on their knees for the mercy of being allowed to give what the other accepts. Feel it for your whole sex, and then tell them how it felt.

Bertha. [*Rising.*] Good night. The day after tomorrow, then.

Axel. You still want the party tomorrow, then?

Bertha. Yes, I want the party tomorrow.

Axel. Good. The day after tomorrow, then.

[*They go out, each their own way right and left.*]

ACT FOUR

Same scene. But the glass doors leading to orchard are open. The sun is still shining outside and the studio is brightly lighted. The side doors are open. A serving table is seen out in the orchard; on it are glasses and bottles, et cetera. AXEL wears cutaway, but without the decoration, and is wearing a standing collar with four-in-hand scarf. His hair is brushed straight back. BERTHA wears a dark gown, cut square, with frilled fichu. She has a flower on the left shoulder. The MISSES HALL are extravagantly and expensively dressed. BERTHA enters from orchard. She is pale and has dark shadows under her eyes. ABEL enters from door at back. They embrace and kiss each other.

Bertha. Good afternoon, and welcome.

Abel. Good afternoon.

Bertha. And Gaga promised to come?

Abel. Absolutely certain. He was in a regretful spirit and begged forgiveness. [*BERTHA straightens out her fichu.*] But what is the matter with you today? Has anything happened?

Bertha. How so? What?

Abel. You are not like yourself. Have you—? Bertha! Have you——

Bertha. Don't talk.

Abel. Your eyes are so full of color and brilliancy! What? Is it possible—? And so pale? Bertha!

Bertha. I must go out to my guests.

Abel. Tell me, are Carl and Östermark here?

Bertha. Both are out in the orchard.

Abel. And Mrs. Hall and the girls?

Bertha. Mrs. Hall will come later, but the girls are in my room.

Abel. I'm afraid that our scheme of revenge will fall as flat as a pancake.

Bertha. No, not this—not this one!

[*WILLMER enters with a bouquet of flowers. He goes to BERTHA,*

kisses her hand, and gives her the bouquet.]

Willmer. Forgive me! For my love's sake!

Bertha. No, not on that account, but—it doesn't matter. I don't know why, but today I don't want any enemies.

[*AXEL comes in. BERTHA and WILLMER look distressed.*]

Axel. [*To BERTHA, not noticing WILLMER.*] Pardon—if I disturb—

Bertha. Not at all.

Axel. I only wanted to ask if you had ordered the supper?

Bertha. Yes, of course—as you wished.

Axel. Very well. I only wanted to know.

[*Pause.*]

Abel. How festive you two look! [*BERTHA and AXEL are silent. WILLMER breaks the embarrassment by starting for the orchard.*] Listen, Gaga— [*She hastens out after WILLMER.*]

Axel. What have you ordered for the supper?

Bertha. [*Looks at him and smiles.*] Lobsters and poulet.

Axel. [*Uncertain.*] What are you smiling at?

Bertha. My thoughts.

Axel. What are you thinking then?

Bertha. I am thinking—no, I really don't know—unless it was about the betrothal supper we had in the Gardens that spring evening when you had wooed—

Axel. You had wooed—

Bertha. Axel!—And now it is the last, last time. It was a short summer.

Axel. Quite short, but the sun will come again.

Bertha. Yes, for you who can find sunshine in every street.

Axel. What is there to hinder you from seeking warmth at the same fire?

Bertha. And so we shall meet again, perhaps—some evening by street light, you mean?

Axel. I didn't mean that—but *à la bonne heure!* That at least will be a free relation.

Bertha. Yes, very free, especially for you.

Axel. For you, too, but pleasanter for me.

Bertha. That's a noble thought.

Axel. Now, now—don't tear open the old wounds! We were talking about the supper.

And we must not forget our guests. Sol [*Goes toward his room right.*]

Bertha. About the supper—yes, of course! That's what we were talking about.

[*She flies toward her room left, stirred and agitated. They both go out. The scene is empty for a moment. Then the MISSES HALL come in from the orchard.*]

Miss Amélie. How very dull it is here!

Miss Thérèse. Insufferably stupid, and our hosts are not altogether polite.

Miss Amélie. The hostess is especially unpleasant. And the short-hair kind, too.

Miss Thérèse. Yes, but I understand that a lieutenant is coming—

Miss Amélie. Well, that's good, for these artists are a lot of free traders. Hush, here is a diplomat surely.—He looks so distinguished.

[*They sit on couch. DOCTOR ÖSTERMARK comes in from the orchard; he discovers the MISSES HALL and looks at them through his pince-nez.*]

Dr. Östermark. I am honored, ladies. H'm, one meets so many of one's countrywomen here. Are you artists, too? You paint, I suppose?

Miss Amélie. No, we don't paint.

Dr. Östermark. Oh, but just a little, perhaps. Here in Paris all ladies paint—themselves.

Miss Thérèse. We don't have to.

Dr. Östermark. Oh, well, you play then?

Miss Amélie. Play?

Dr. Östermark. Oh, I don't mean playing at cards. But all ladies play a little.

Miss Amélie. Evidently you are just from the country.

Dr. Östermark. Yes, just from the country. Can I be of any slight service to you?

Miss Thérèse. Pardon, but we don't know with whom we have the honor—?

Dr. Östermark. You ladies have evidently just come from Stockholm. In this country we can talk to each other without asking for references.

Miss Amélie. We haven't asked for references.

Dr. Östermark. What do you ask, then? To have your curiosity satisfied? Well, I'm an old family physician and my name is Anderson. Perhaps I may know your names now?—Character not needed.

Miss Thérèse. We are the Misses Hall, if that can be of any interest to the doctor.

Dr. Östermark. Hall? H'm! I've surely heard that name before. Pardon, pardon me a question, a somewhat countrified question—

Miss Amélie. Don't be bashful!

Dr. Östermark. Is your father still living?

Miss Amélie. No, he is dead.

Dr. Östermark. Oh, yes. Well, now that I have gone so far, there is nothing to do but continue. Mr. Hall was—

Miss Thérèse. Our father was a director of the Fire Insurance Company of Göteborg.

Dr. Östermark. Oh, well, then I beg your pardon. Do you find Paris to your liking?

Miss Amélie. Very! Thérèse, do you remember what I did with my shawl? Such a cold draught here! *[Rises.]*

Miss Thérèse. You left it in the orchard, no doubt.

Dr. Östermark. *[Rising.]* No, don't go out. Allow me to find it for you—no—sit still—just sit still.

[Goes out into orchard. After a moment Mrs. Hall comes in from left, quite comfortable with drink; her cheeks are flaming red and her voice is uncertain.]

Miss Amélie. Look, there's mother! And in that condition again! Heavens, why does she come here? Why did you come here, mother?

Mrs. Hall. Keep quiet! I have as much right here as you.

Miss Thérèse. Why have you been drinking again? Think if someone should come!

Mrs. Hall. I haven't been drinking. What nonsense!

Miss Amélie. We will be ruined if the doctor should come back and see you. Come, let's go in here and you can get a glass of water.

Mrs. Hall. It's nice of you to treat your mother like this and say that she has been drinking, to say such a thing to your own mother!

Miss Thérèse. Don't talk, but go in, immediately.

[They lead her in right. AXEL and CARL come in from the orchard.]

Carl. Well, you're looking fine, my dear Axel, and you have a manlier bearing than you used to have.

Axel. Yes, I have emancipated myself.

Carl. You should have done that at the start, as I did.

Axel. As you did?

Carl. As I did. Immediately I took my position as head of the family, to which place I found myself called both because of my superior mind and my natural abilities.

Axel. And how did your wife like that?

Carl. Do you know, I forgot to ask her! But to judge by appearances, I should say that she found things as they should be. They only need real men—and human beings can be made even out of women.

Axel. But at least the power should be divided?

Carl. Power cannot be divided! Either obey or command. Either you or I. I preferred myself to her, and she had to adjust herself to it.

Axel. Yes, but didn't she have money?

Carl. Not at all. She didn't bring more than a silver soup-spoon to our nest. But she demanded an accounting of it; and she got it. She was a woman of principle, you see! — She is so good, so good, but so am I good to her. I think it's really great sport to be married, what? And besides, she's such a splendid cook!

[The MISSES HALL come in from right.]

Axel. Let me introduce you to the Misses Hall, Lieutenant Starck.

Carl. I am very happy to make your *[gives them a look of recognition]* acquaintance.

[The young ladies seem surprised and embarrassed; they nod and go out to the orchard somewhat excited.]

Carl. How did they get in here?

Axel. What do you mean? They are friends of my wife's and this is the first time that they have been here. Do you know them?

Carl. Yes, somewhat!

Axel. What do you mean to imply?

Carl. H'm, I met them in St. Petersburg—late one night!

Axel. Late one night?

Carl. Yes.

Axel. Isn't there some mistake?

Carl. No-o! There is no mistake. They were very well known ladies in St. Petersburg.

Axel. And Bertha allows that kind in my house!

[BERTHA comes rushing in from orchard.]

Bertha. What does this mean? Have you insulted the young ladies?

Axel. No—but—

Bertha. They came out of here crying and declared that they couldn't stay in the company of you gentlemen any longer! What has happened?

Axel. Do you know these young ladies?

Bertha. They are my friends! Isn't that enough?

Axel. Not quite enough.

Bertha. Not quite? Well, but if —

[DR. ÖSTERMARK comes in from the orchard.]

Dr. Östermark. What does this mean? What have you done to the little girls who ran away? I offered to help them with their wraps, but they refused to be helped and had tears in their eyes.

Carl. [To BERTHA.] I must ask you, are they your friends?

Bertha. Yes, they are! But if my protection is not sufficient, then perhaps Doctor Östermark will take them under his wing, considering that he has a certain claim to them.

Carl. But a mistake has been made here. You mean that I, who have had certain relations with these girls, should appear as their cavalier?

Bertha. What sort of relations?

Carl. Chance, such as one has with such women!

Bertha. Such women? That's a lie!

Carl. I'm not in the habit of lying.

Dr. Östermark. But I don't understand what I have got to do with these young ladies.

Bertha. You would prefer to have nothing to do with your deserted children.

Dr. Östermark. My children! But I don't understand.

Bertha. They are your two daughters—daughters of your divorced wife.

Dr. Östermark. Since you consider that you have the right to be personal and make my affairs the subject of public discussion, I will answer you publicly. You seem to have taken the trouble to find out that I am not a widower. Good! My marriage, which was childless, was dissolved twenty years ago. Since then I have entered into

another relation, and we have a child that is just five years old. These grown girls, therefore, cannot be my children. Now you know the whole matter.

Bertha. But your wife—whom you threw out upon the world—

Dr. Östermark. No, that wasn't the case either. She walked out, or staggered, if you prefer it, and then she received half my income until at last I found out that—enough said. If you could conceive what it cost me of work and self-denial to support two establishments, you would have spared me this unpleasant moment, but your kind wouldn't consider anything like that. You needn't know any more, as it really doesn't concern you.

Bertha. But it would amuse me to know why your first wife left you.

Dr. Östermark. I don't think it would amuse you to know that she was ugly, narrow, paltry, and that I was too good for her! Think now, you tender-hearted, sensitive Bertha, think if they really had been my daughters, these friends of yours and Carl's; imagine how my old heart would have been gladdened to see, after eighteen years, these children that I had borne in my arms during the long night of illness. And imagine if she, my first love, my wife, with whom life the first time became life, had accepted your invitation and come here? What a fifth act in the melodrama you wished to offer us, what a noble revenge on one who is guiltless! Thanks, old friend. Thank you for your reward for the friendship I have shown you.

Bertha. Reward! Yes, I know that I owe you—a fee. [AXEL, CARL and the DOCTOR make protestations of "Oh," "Now," "Really," et cetera.] I know that, I know it very well.

[AXEL, CARL and DOCTOR say "No,"

"Fie," "This is going too far."]

Dr. Östermark. No, but I'm going to get out of here. Horrors! Yes, you are the right sort! Pardon me, Axel, but I can't help it!

Bertha. [To AXEL.] You're a fine man, to allow your wife to be insulted!

Axel. I can understand neither your allowing yourself to insult, or to be insulted! [Music is heard from the orchard; guitar and an Italian song.] The singers have arrived; perhaps you would all like to step

out and have a bit of harmony on top of all this.

[They all go out except the Doctor, who goes over to look at some drawings on wall right near door to AXEL'S room. The music outside is played softly. MRS. HALL comes in and walks unsteadily across the scene and sits in a chair. The Doctor, who does not recognize her, bows deeply.]

Mrs. Hall. What music is that out there?

Dr. Östermark. They are some Italians, dear lady.

Mrs. Hall. Yes? No doubt the ones I heard at Monte Carlo.

Dr. Östermark. Oh, perhaps there are other Italians.

Mrs. Hall. Well, I believe it's none other than Östermark! No one could be as quick as he in his retorts.

Dr. Östermark. *[Starts at her.]* Ah—think—there are things—that—are less dreadful than dread! It is you, Carolina! And this is the moment that for eighteen years I have been running away from, dreamed about, sought, feared, wished for; wished for that I might receive the shock and afterward have nothing to dread! *[He takes out a vial and wets his upper lip with a few drops.]* Don't be afraid; it's not poison, in such little doses. It's for the heart, you see.

Mrs. Hall. Ugh, your heart! Yes, you have so much!

Dr. Östermark. It's strange that two people cannot meet once every eighteen years without quarreling.

Mrs. Hall. It was always you who quarreled!

Dr. Östermark. Alone? What!—Shall we stop now?—I must try to look at you. *[He takes a chair and sits down opposite Mrs. Hall.]* Without trembling!

Mrs. Hall. I've become old!

Dr. Östermark. That's what happens; one has read about it, seen it, felt it one's self, but nevertheless it is horrifying. I am old, too.

Mrs. Hall. Are you happy in your new life?

Dr. Östermark. To tell the truth, it's one and the same thing; different, but quite the same.

Mrs. Hall. Perhaps the old life was better, then?

Dr. Östermark. No, it wasn't better, as it was about the same, but it's a question if it wouldn't have seemed better now, just because it was the old life. One doesn't blossom but once, and then one goes to seed; what comes afterward is only a little aftermath. And you, how are you getting along?

Mrs. Hall. *[Offended.]* What do you mean?

Dr. Östermark. Don't misunderstand me. Are you contented with—your—lot? I mean—oh, that it should be so difficult to make one's self understood by women!

Mrs. Hall. Contented? H'm!

Dr. Östermark. Well, you were never contented. But when one is young, one always demands the first class, and then one gets the third class when one is old. Now, I understand that you told Mrs. Alberg here that your girls are my children!

Mrs. Hall. I did? That is a lie.

Dr. Östermark. Still untruthful, eh? In the old days, when I was foolish, I looked upon lying as a vice; but now I know it to be a natural defect. You actually believe in your lies, and that is dangerous. But never mind about that now. Are you leaving, or do you wish me to leave?

Mrs. Hall. *[Rising.]* I will go.

[She falls back into the chair and gropes about.]

Dr. Östermark. What, drunk too?—I really pity you. Oh, this is most unpleasant! Dear me, I believe I'm ready to cry!—Carolina! No, I can't bear this!

Mrs. Hall. I am ill.

Dr. Östermark. Yes, that's what happens when one drinks too much. But this is more bitter than I ever thought it could be. I have killed little unborn children to be able to save the mother, and I have felt them tremble in their fight against death. I have cut living muscles, and have seen the marrow flow like butter from healthy bones, but never has anything hurt me so much as this since the day you left me. Then it was as if you had gone away with one of my lungs, so I could only gasp with the other!—Oh, I feel as if I were suffocating now!

Mrs. Hall. Help me out of here. It's too

noisy. I don't know why we came here, anyway. Give me your hand.

Dr. Östermark. [*Leading her to door.*] Before it was I who asked for your hand; and it rested so heavily on me, the little delicate hand! Once it struck my face, the little delicate hand, but I kissed it nevertheless.—Oh, now it is withered, and will never strike again.—Ah, dolce Napoli! Joy of life, what became of it? You who were the bride of my youth!

Mrs. Hall. [*In the hall door.*] Where is my wrap?

Dr. Östermark. [*Closing door.*] In the hall, probably. This is horrible! [*Lights a cigar.*] Oh, dolce Napoli! I wonder if it is as delightful as it's said to be in that cholera-breeding fishing harbor. *Blague*, no doubt! *Blague! Blague!* Naples—bridal couples, love, joy of life, antiquities, modernity, liberalism, conservatism, idealism, realism, naturalism,—*blague, blague*, the whole thing!

[*Axel, Abel, Willmer, Mrs. Starck and Bertha come in from orchard.*]

Mrs. Starck. What is happening to the doctor?

Dr. Östermark. Pardon, it was only a little *qui pro quo*. Two strangers sneaked in here and we had to identify them.

Mrs. Starck. The girls?

Carl. Well, that has nothing to do with you. I don't know why, but I seem to feel "the enemy in the air."

Mrs. Starck. Ah, you're always seeing the enemy, you dear Carl.

Carl. No, I don't see them, but I feel them.

Mrs. Starck. Well, come to your friend, then, and she will defend you.

Carl. Oh, you're always so good to me.

Mrs. Starck. Why shouldn't I be, when you are so good to me?

[*The door at back is opened and the MAID and two men come in carrying a picture.*]

Axel. What's this?

Maid. The porter said that it must be carried into the studio, as he didn't have any room for it.

Axel. What foolishness is this? Take it out.

Maid. The mistress sent for the picture herself.

Bertha. That's not true. For that matter, it's not my picture, anyway. It's your master's. Put it down there. [*The MAID and the man go out.*] Perhaps it isn't yours, Axel? Let's see. [*Axel places himself in front of picture.*] Move a little so we can see.

Axel. [*Gives way.*] It's a mistake.

Bertha. [*Shrieks.*] What! What is this! It's a mistake! What does it mean? It's my picture, but it's Axel's number! Oh!

[*She falls in a faint. The Doctor and CARL carry her into her room left, the women follow.*]

Abel. She is dying!

Mrs. Starck. Heaven help us, what is this! The poor little dear! Doctor Östermark, do something, say something—and Axel stands there crestfallen.

[*Axel and WILLMER are alone.*]

Axel. This is your doing.

Willmer. My doing?

[*Axel takes him by the ear.*]

Axel. Yes, yours, but not altogether. But I am going to give you your share. [*He leads him to the door, which he opens with one foot, and kicks out WILLMER with the other.*] Out with you!

Willmer. I'll get even for this!

Axel. I shall be waiting for it!

[*Doctor and CARL come in.*]

Dr. Östermark. What's the trouble with the picture, anyway?

Axel. Nothing—only that it seemed to represent sulphuric acid.

Carl. Now tell us, are you refused, or is she?

Axel. I am refused on her picture. I wanted to help her a bit, as a good comrade, and that's why I changed the numbers.

Dr. Östermark. Yes, but there is something else too. She says that you don't love her any more.

Axel. She is right in that. That's how it is, and tomorrow we part.

Dr. Östermark and Carl. Part?

Axel. Yes, when there are no ties to bind things, they loosen of themselves. This wasn't a marriage; it was only living together, or something even worse.

Dr. Östermark. There is bad air here. Come, let's go.

Axel. Yes, I want to get out—out of here.

[*They start for the door. ABEL comes in.*]

Abel. What, are you leaving?

Axel. Does that astonish you?

Abel. Let me have a word with you.

Axel. Go on.

Abel. Don't you want to go in and see Bertha?

Axel. No!

Abel. What have you done to her?

Axel. I have bent her.

Abel. I noticed that—she is black and blue around the wrists! Look at me! I didn't think that of you. Well, conqueror, triumph now!

Axel. It's an uncertain conquest, and I don't even wish for it.

Abel. Are you sure of that? [*She leans over to AXEL, in low voice.*] Bertha loves you now—now that you have bent her.

Axel. I know it. But I don't love her any longer.

Abel. Won't you go in and see her?

Axel. No, it's all over. [*Takes Doctor's arms.*] Come!

Abel. May I take a message to Bertha?

Axel. No! Yes! Tell her, that I despise and abhor her.

Abel. Good-bye, my friend.

Axel. Good-bye, my enemy.

Abel. Enemy?

Axel. Are you my friend?

Abel. I don't know. Both and neither. I am a bastard—

Axel. We are all that, as we are crocheted out of man and woman! Perhaps you have loved me in your way, as you wanted to separate Bertha and me.

Abel. [*Rolling a cigarette.*] Loved! I wonder how it seems to love? No, I cannot love; I must be deformed—for it made me happy to see you two until the envy of deformity set me on fire. Perhaps you love me?

Axel. No, on my honor! You have been an agreeable comrade who happened to be dressed like a woman; you have never impressed me as belonging to another sex; and love, you see, can and should exist only between individuals of opposite sexes—

Abel. Sex love, yes!

Axel. Is there any other, then?

Abel. I don't know! But I am to be pitted. And this hate, this terrible hate! Perhaps that would disappear if you men were not so afraid to love us, if you were

not so—how shall I express it—so moral, as it's called.

Axel. But in heaven's name, be a little more lovable, then, and don't get yourselves up so that one is forced to think of the penal law whenever one looks at you.

Abel. Do you think I'm such a fright, then?

Axel. Well, you know, you must pardon me, but you are awful.

[*BERTHA comes in.*]

Bertha. [*To AXEL.*] Are you going?

Axel. Yes, I was just about to go, but now I'll stay.

Bertha. [*Softly.*] What? You—

Axel. I shall stay in my home.

Bertha. In our—home.

Axel. No, in mine. In my studio with my furniture.

Bertha. And I?

Axel. You may do what you please, but you must know what you risk. You see in my suit I have applied for one year's separation in bed and board. Should you stay, that is to say, if you should seek me during this time, you would have to choose between imprisonment, or being considered my mistress. Do you feel like staying?

Bertha. Oh, is that the law?

Axel. That's the law.

Bertha. You drive me out, then?

Axel. No, but the law does.

Bertha. And you think I'll be satisfied with that?

Axel. No, I don't, for you won't be satisfied until you have taken all the life out of me.

Bertha. Axel! How you talk! If you knew how I—love you!

Axel. That doesn't sound irrational, but I don't love you.

Bertha. [*Flaring up and pointing to AXEL.*] Because you love her!

Axel. No, indeed, I don't. Have never loved her, and never will. What incredible imagining! As if there were not other women and more fascinating than you two!

Bertha. But Abel loves you!

Axel. That is possible. I even believe that she suggested something of the kind. Yes, she said so distinctly; let's see, how was it—

Bertha. [*Changing.*] You are really the most shameless creature I have ever met!

Axel. Yes, I can well believe that.

Bertha. [*Puts on her hat and wrap.*] Now you expect to put me out on the street? That is final?

Axel. On the street, or where you please.

Bertha. [*Angry.*] Do you think a woman will allow herself to be treated like this?

Axel. Once you asked me to forget that you were a woman. Very well, I have forgotten it.

Bertha. But do you know that you have liabilities to the one who has been your wife?

Axel. You mean the pay for good comradeship? What? A life annuity!

Bertha. Yes.

Axel. [*Putting a few bills on the table.*] Here is a month in advance.

Bertha. [*Takes money and counts it.*] You still have a little honor left!

Abel. Good-bye, Bertha. Now I am off.

Bertha. Wait and you can go along with me.

Abel. No, I won't go any further with you.

Bertha. What? Why not?

Abel. I am ashamed to.

Bertha. [*Astonished.*] Ashamed?

Abel. Yes, ashamed. Good-bye. [*Goes out.*]

Bertha. I don't understand. Good-bye, Axel! Thanks for the money. Are we friends? [*Taking his hand.*]

Axel. I am not, at least.—Let go of my hand, or I will believe that you wish to seduce me again.

[*BERTHA goes toward door.*]

Axel. [*With a sigh of relief.*] Pleasant comrades! Oh!

[*The MAID enters from the orchard.*]

Maid. [*To AXEL.*] There is a lady waiting for you.

Axel. I'll soon be free.

Bertha. Is that the new comrade?

Axel. No, not comrade, but sweetheart.

Bertha. And your wife to be?

Axel. Perhaps. Because I want to meet my comrades at the café, but at home I want a wife. [*Starts as if to go.*] Pardon me!

Bertha. Farewell, then! Are we never to meet again?

Axel. Yes, of course! But at the café. Good-bye!

THE END

PELLÉAS AND MÉLISANDE

By MAURICE MAETERLINCK

Translated from the French by RICHARD HOVEY

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MAURICE MAETERLINCK AND HIS PLAYS

MAURICE MAETERLINCK, scientist, philosophic mystic, poet, and dramatist, the author of *Pelléas and Mélisande*, was born in Ghent, Belgium, in 1862. After practicing law for a time, he lived in Paris, where he became a leader in the symbolist movement in poetry; returned to Belgium in 1888; and returned to France in 1896, which he has ever since made his home. Between 1889 and 1896 he wrote the plays of his so-called "early period" that have been his most distinctive and influential contribution to the drama. These were followed by various works of philosophy and science. His reputation is based as much upon these as upon his poems and his plays.

Maeterlinck's early plays, though written in French, are not in the tradition of French drama. They are not French in feeling, in the first place; and, again, their material, their technique, and their style spring from sources other than French. The symbolism of later French poetry never reached the French stage; and Maeterlinck, a leader in the symbolistic movement in poetry, is the only dramatist writing in French who has applied this method to the drama. Between the earlier and the later plays of Maeterlinck there is in every respect a striking difference. His early plays were written actually to be performed by marionettes, since he held that the personality of the human actor was not a sufficiently clear medium for the transmission of the dramatist's ideas.

Furthermore, he maintained that mere action was not essential to drama, and was even a detriment, as he states in a famous passage in his *Treasure of the Humble*: "I have grown to believe that an old man, seated in his armchair, waiting patiently, with his lamp beside him; giving unconscious ear to all the eternal laws that reign about his house, interpreting, without comprehending, the silence of doors and windows and the quivering voice of the light, submitting with bent head to the presence of his soul and his destiny. . . . I have grown to believe that he, motionless as he is, does yet live in reality a deeper, more human, and more universal life than the lover who strangles his mistress, the captain who conquers in battle, or the husband who avenges his honor."

But the plays written under this theory are less static than might be expected. They have little external action, it is true, and that little moves almost imperceptibly; but a mighty stream of feeling flows beneath the surface and breaks out at last in a rush that carries the action over the precipice. Throughout such early plays as *The Blind*, *The Intruder*, *Home*, and *The Death of Tintagiles*, Maeterlinck is dramatizing the subconscious; his characters are willless creatures of destiny, moving blindly toward a fore-ordained doom. Their speech is musical, and like music, is suggestive of many moods; for Maeterlinck, as does D'Annunzio, utilizes the resources of other arts, thus widening the scope of dramatic technique. His "atmosphere" is established partly by this word-music, partly by his unworldly settings. And through all runs the insistent, suggestive symbolism of both setting and action, in which overtones and implications say more than direct speech, the symbol more than the fact.

Maeterlinck's later plays belong, principally, to another order, in which he entirely reverses his theory of the drama. In his *Double Garden*, he says, "Do what one will, discover what marvels one may, the sovereign law of the stage, its essential demand, will always be *action*." But it is the Maeterlinck of the early plays who has exercised so potent an influence upon European drama and has affected dramatists so diverse as Hauptmann, D'Annunzio, Andrejev, and Claudel. As for content: the enigma of human fate, the sway of destiny, the power of the subconscious, the intense but almost hidden inner conflict; as for method: the slow, psychological action, the musical, hesitant, repetitious speech, the pictorially lovely and dream-like settings; and, always, the suggestive power of symbolism.

Pelléas and Mélisande is distinctly a transitional play from the earlier to the later method, combining some of the best qualities of each. It was produced first in Paris, in 1893. In London in 1895 it was produced in French by Lugné-Poe and his company, under the auspices of The Independent Theatre. The first production in English in London was made in 1898 by Mrs. Patrick Campbell, who also made the first production in America, in New York, in 1902. In 1923 the play was revived in New York with Jane Cowl as Mélisande.

CHARACTERS

ARKËL, *King of Allemonde*

GENEVÈVE, *mother of Pelléas and Golaud*

PELLÉAS, }
GOLAUD, } *grandsons of Arkël*

MÉLISANDE

LITTLE YNIOLD, *son of Golaud (by a former
marriage)*

A PHYSICIAN

THE PORTER

Servants, Beggars, etc.

*The action takes place in an imaginary kingdom suggestive of the
Middle Ages*

PELLÉAS AND MÉLISANDE

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE—*The gate of the castle.*

Maidservants [within]. Open the gate!
Open the gate!

Porter [within]. Who is there? Why do you come and wake me up? Go out by the little gates; there are enough of them! . . .

A Maidservant [within]. We have come to wash the threshold, the gate, and the steps; open, then! open!

Another Maidservant [within]. There are going to be great happenings!

Third Maidservant [within]. There are going to be great fêtes! Open quickly!

The Maidservants. Open! open!

Porter. Wait! wait! I do not know whether I shall be able to open it; . . . it is never opened. . . . Wait till it is light. . . .

First Maidservant. It is light enough without; I see the sunlight through the chinks. . . .

Porter. Here are the great keys. . . . Oh! oh! how the bolts and the locks grate! . . . Help me! help me! . . .

Maidservants. We are pulling; we are pulling. . . .

Second Maidservant. It will not open. . . .

First Maidservant. Ah! ah! It is opening! it is opening slowly!

Porter. How it shrieks! how it shrieks! It will wake up everybody. . . .

Second Maidservant [appearing on the threshold]. Oh, how light it is already out-of-doors!

First Maidservant. The sun is rising on the sea!

Porter. It is open. . . . It is wide open!

[*All the maidservants appear on the threshold and pass over it.*]

First Maidservant. I am going to wash the sill first. . . .

Second Maidservant. We shall never be able to clean all this.

Other Maidservants. Fetch the water! fetch the water!

Porter. Yes, yes; pour on water; pour on water; pour on all the water of the Flood! You will never come to the end of it. . . .

SCENE TWO—*A forest. MÉLISANDE discovered at the brink of a spring.*

[*Enter GOLAUD.*]

Golaud. I shall never be able to get out of this forest again.—God knows where that beast has led me. And yet I thought I had wounded him to death; and here are traces of blood. But now I have lost sight of him; I believe I am lost myself—my dogs can no longer find me—I shall retrace my steps. . . . I hear weeping. . . . Oh! oh! what is there yonder by the water's edge? . . . A little girl weeping by the water's edge? [*He coughs.*] She does not hear me. I cannot see her face. [*He approaches and touches MÉLISANDE on the shoulder.*] Why weepest thou? [*MÉLISANDE trembles, starts up, and would flee.*] Do not be afraid. You have nothing to fear. Why are you weeping here all alone?

Mélisande. Do not touch me! do not touch me!

Golaud. Do not be afraid. . . . I will not do you any . . . Oh, you are beautiful!

Mélisande. Do not touch me! do not touch me! or I throw myself in the water! . . .

Golaud. I will not touch you. . . . See, I will stay here, against the tree. Do not be afraid. Has any one hurt you?

Mélisande. Oh! yes! yes! yes! . . . [*She sobs profoundly.*]

Golaud. Who has hurt you?

Mélisande. Every one! every one!

Golaud. What hurt have they done you?

Mélisande. I will not tell! I cannot tell! . . .

Golaud. Come; do not weep so. Whence come you?

Mélisande. I have fled! . . . fled . . . fled. . . .

Golaud. Yes; but whence have you fled?

Mélisande. I am lost! . . . lost! . . . Oh! oh! lost here. . . . I am not of this place. . . . I was not born here. . . .

Golaud. Whence are you? Where were you born?

Mélisande. Oh! oh! far away from here! . . . far away . . . far away. . . .

Golaud. What is it shining so at the bottom of the water?

Mélisande. Where?—Ah! it is the crown he gave me. It fell as I was weeping. . . .

Golaud. A crown?—Who was it gave you a crown?—I will try to get it. . . .

Mélisande. No, no; I will have no more of it! I will have no more of it! . . . I had rather die. . . . die at once. . . .

Golaud. I could easily pull it out. The water is not very deep.

Mélisande. I will have no more of it! If you take it out, I throw myself in its place! . . .

Golaud. No, no; I will leave it there. It could be reached without difficulty, nevertheless. It seems very beautiful.—Is it long since you fled?

Mélisande. Yes, yes! . . . Who are you?

Golaud. I am Prince Golaud,—grandson of Arkël, the old King of Allemonde.

Mélisande. Oh, you have gray hairs already. . . .

Golaud. Yes; some, here, by the temples. . . .

Mélisande. And in your beard, too. . . . Why do you look at me so?

Golaud. I am looking at your eyes.—Do you never shut your eyes?

Mélisande. Oh, yes; I shut them at night. . . .

Golaud. Why do you look so astonished?

Mélisande. You are a giant.

Golaud. I am a man like the rest. . . .

Mélisande. Why have you come here?

Golaud. I do not know, myself. I was hunting in the forest. I was chasing a wild boar. I mistook the road.—You look very young. How old are you?

Mélisande. I am beginning to be cold.

Golaud. Will you come with me?

Mélisande. No, no; I will stay here.

Golaud. You cannot stay here all alone. You cannot stay here all night long. . . . What is your name?

Mélisande. Mélisande.

Golaud. You cannot stay here, Mélisande. Come with me. . . .

Mélisande. I will stay here. . . .

Golaud. You will be afraid, all alone. We do not know what there may be here . . . all night long . . . all alone . . . it is impossible. Mélisande, come, give me your hand. . . .

Mélisande. Oh, do not touch me! . . .

Golaud. Do not scream. . . . I will not touch you again. But come with me. The night will be very dark and very cold. Come with me. . . .

Mélisande. Where are you going? . . .

Golaud. I do not know. . . . I am lost too. . . . [Exit.]

SCENE THREE—A hall in the castle. ARKËL and GENEVIÈVE discovered.

Geneviève. Here is what he writes to his brother Pelléas: "I found her all in tears one evening, beside a spring in the forest where I had lost myself. I do not know her age, nor who she is, nor whence she comes, and I dare not question her, for she must have had a sore fright; and when you ask her what has happened to her, she falls at once a-weeping like a child, and sobs so heavily you are afraid. Just as I found her by the spring, a crown of gold had slipped from her hair and fallen to the bottom of the water. She was clad, besides, like a princess, though her garments had been torn by the briars. It is now six months since I married her and I know no more about it than on the day of our meeting. Meanwhile, dear Pelléas, thou whom I love more than a brother, although we were not born of the same father; meanwhile make ready for my return. . . . I know my mother will willingly forgive me. But I am afraid of the King, our venerable grandsire, I am afraid of Arkël, in spite of all his kindness, for I have undone by this strange marriage all his plans of state, and I fear the beauty of Mélisande will not excuse my folly to eyes so wise as his. If he consents nevertheless to receive her as he would receive his own daughter, the third night following this letter, light a lamp at the top of the tower that overlooks the sea. I shall perceive it from the bridge of our ship; otherwise I shall go far away again and come back no more. . . ." What say you of it?

Arkël. Nothing. He has done what he probably must have done. I am very old, and nevertheless I have not yet seen clearly for one moment into myself; how would you that I judge what others have done? I am not far from the tomb and do not succeed in judging myself. . . . One always mistakes when one does not close his eyes. That may seem strange to us; but that is all. He is past the age to marry and he weds, like a child, a little girl he finds by a spring. . . . That may seem

strange to us, because we never see but the reverse of destinies . . . the reverse even of our own. . . . He has always followed my counsels hitherto; I had thought to make him happy in sending him to ask the hand of Princess Ursula. . . . He could not remain alone; since the death of his wife he has been sad to be alone; and that marriage would have put an end to long wars and old hatreds. . . . He would not have it so. Let it be as he would have it; I have never put myself athwart a destiny; and he knows better than I his future. There happen perhaps no useless events. . . .

Geneviève. He has always been so prudent, so grave and so firm. . . . If it were Pelléas, I should understand. . . . But he . . . at his age. . . . Who is it he is going to introduce here?—An unknown found along the roads. . . . Since his wife's death, he has no longer lived for aught but his son, the little Yniold, and if he were about to marry again, it was because you had wished it. . . . And now . . . a little girl in the forest. . . . He has forgotten everything. . . .—What shall we do? . . .

[*Enter PELLÉAS.*]

Arkël. Who is coming in there?

Geneviève. It is Pelléas. He has been weeping.

Arkël. Is it thou, Pelléas?—Come a little nearer, that I may see thee in the light. . . .

Pelléas. Grandfather, I received another letter at the same time as my brother's; a letter from my friend Marcellus. . . . He is about to die and calls for me. He would see me before dying. . . .

Arkël. Thou wouldst leave before thy brother's return?—Perhaps thy friend is less ill than he thinks. . . .

Pelléas. His letter is so sad you can see death between the lines. . . . He says he knows the very day when death must come. . . . He tells me I can arrive before it if I will, but that there is no more time to lose. The journey is very long, and if I await Golaud's return, it will be perhaps too late. . . .

Arkël. Thou must wait a little while, nevertheless. . . . We do not know what this return has in store for us. And, besides, is not thy father here, above us, more sick perhaps than thy friend? . . . Couldst thou choose between the father and the friend? . . . [*Exit.*]

Geneviève. Have a care to keep the lamp lit from this evening, Pelléas. . . .

[*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE FOUR—*Before the castle.*

[*Enter GENEVIÈVE and MÉLISANDE.*]

Mélisande. It is gloomy in the gardens. And what forests, what forests all about the palaces. . . .

Geneviève. Yes; that astonished me too when I came hither; it astonishes everybody. There are places where you never see the sun. But one gets used to it so quickly. . . . It is long ago, it is long ago. . . . It is nearly forty years that I have lived here. . . . Look toward the other side, you will have the light of the sea. . . .

Mélisande. I hear a noise below us. . . .

Geneviève. Yes; it is some one coming up toward us. . . . Ah! it is Pelléas. . . . He seems still tired from having waited so long for you. . . .

Mélisande. He has not seen us.

Geneviève. I think he has seen us but does not know what he should do. . . . Pelléas, Pelléas, is it thou? . . .

[*Enter PELLÉAS.*]

Pelléas. Yes! . . . I was coming toward the sea. . . .

Geneviève. So were we; we were seeking the light. It is a little lighter here than elsewhere; and yet the sea is gloomy.

Pelléas. We shall have a storm to-night. There has been one every night for some time, and yet it is so calm now. . . . One might embark unwittingly and come back no more.

Mélisande. Something is leaving the port.

Pelléas. It must be a big ship. . . . The lights are very high, we shall see it in a moment, when it enters the band of light. . . .

Geneviève. I do not know whether we shall be able to see it . . . there is still a fog on the sea. . . .

Pelléas. The fog seems to be rising slowly.

Mélisande. Yes; I see a little light down there, which I had not seen. . . .

Pelléas. It is a lighthouse; there are others we cannot see yet.

Mélisande. The ship is in the light. . . . It is already very far away. . . .

Pelléas. It is a foreign ship. It looks larger than ours. . . .

Mélisande. It is the ship that brought me here! . . .

Pelléas. It flies away under full sail. . . .

Mélisande. It is the ship that brought me

here. It has great sails. . . . I recognized it by its sails.

Pelléas. There will be a rough sea to-night.

Mélisande. Why does it go away to-night? . . . You can hardly see it any longer. . . . Perhaps it will be wrecked. . . .

Pelléas. The night falls very quickly. . . .

[*A silence.*]

Geneviève. No one speaks any more? . . . You have nothing more to say to each other? . . . It is time to go in. *Pelléas*, show *Mélisande* the way. I must go see little *Yniold* a moment. [*Exit.*]

Pelléas. Nothing can be seen any longer on the sea. . . .

Mélisande. I see more lights.

Pelléas. It is the other lighthouses. . . . Do you hear the sea? . . . It is the wind rising. . . . Let us go down this way. Will you give me your hand?

Mélisande. See, see, my hands are full. . . .

Pelléas. I will hold you by the arm, the road is steep and it is very gloomy there. . . . I am going away perhaps to-morrow. . . .

Mélisande. Oh! . . . why do you go away?

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE—*A fountain in the park.*

[*Enter PELLÉAS and MÉLISANDE.*]

Pelléas. You do not know where I have brought you?—I often come to sit here, toward noon, when it is too hot in the gardens. It is stifling to-day, even in the shade of the trees.

Mélisande. Oh, how clear the water is! . . .

Pelléas. It is as cool as winter. It is an old abandoned spring. It seems to have been a miraculous spring,—it opened the eyes of the blind,—they still call it "Blind Man's Spring."

Mélisande. It no longer opens the eyes of the blind?

Pelléas. Since the King has been nearly blind himself, no one comes any more. . . .

Mélisande. How alone one is here! . . . There is no sound.

Pelléas. There is always a wonderful silence here. . . . One could hear the water sleep. . . . Will you sit down on the edge of the marble basin? There is one linden where the sun never comes. . . .

Mélisande. I am going to lie down on the

marble.—I should like to see the bottom of the water. . . .

Pelléas. No one has ever seen it. It is as deep, perhaps, as the sea. It is not known whence it comes. Perhaps it comes from the bottom of the earth. . . .

Mélisande. If there were anything shining at the bottom, perhaps one could see it. . . .

Pelléas. Do not lean over so. . . .

Mélisande. I would like to touch the water. . . .

Pelléas. Have a care of slipping. . . . I will hold your hand. . . .

Mélisande. No, no, I would plunge both hands in it. . . . You would say my hands were sick to-day. . . .

Pelléas. Oh! oh! take care! take care! *Mélisande!* . . . *Mélisande!* . . . Oh! your hair! . . .

Mélisande [*starting upright*]. I cannot . . . I cannot reach it. . . .

Pelléas. Your hair dipped in the water.

Mélisande. Yes, it is longer than my arms. . . . It is longer than I. . . . [*A silence.*]

Pelléas. It was at the brink of a spring, too, that he found you?

Mélisande. Yes. . . .

Pelléas. What did he say to you?

Mélisande. Nothing;—I no longer remember. . . .

Pelléas. Was he quite near you?

Mélisande. Yes; he would have kissed me.

Pelléas. And you would not?

Mélisande. No.

Pelléas. Why would you not?

Mélisande. Oh! oh! I saw something pass at the bottom of the water. . . .

Pelléas. Take care! take care!—You will fall! What are you playing with?

Mélisande. With the ring he gave me.

Pelléas. Take care; you will lose it. . . .

Mélisande. No, no; I am sure of my hands.

Pelléas. Do not play so, over so deep a water. . . .

Mélisande. My hands do not tremble.

Pelléas. How it shines in the sunlight!—Do not throw it so high in the air. . . .

Mélisande. Oh! . . .

Pelléas. It has fallen?

Mélisande. It has fallen into the water!

Pelléas. Where is it? where is it? . . .

Mélisande. I do not see it sink. . . .

Pelléas. I think I see it shine. . . .

Mélisande. My ring?

Pelléas. Yes, yes; down yonder. . . .

Mélisande. Oh! oh! It is so far away from us! . . . no, no, that is not it . . . that is not it . . . It is lost . . . lost. . . . There is nothing any more but a great circle on the water. . . . What shall we do? What shall we do now?

Pelléas. You need not be so troubled for a ring. It is nothing. . . . We shall find it again, perhaps. Or else we shall find another.

Mélisande. No, no; we shall never find it again; we shall never find any others either. . . . And yet I thought I had it in my hands. . . . I had already shut my hands, and it is fallen in spite of all. . . . I threw it too high, toward the sun. . . .

Pelléas. Come, come, we will come back another day; . . . come, it is time. They will come to meet us. It was striking noon at the moment the ring fell.

Mélisande. What shall we say to Golaud if he asks where it is?

Pelléas. The truth, the truth, the truth.
[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE TWO—*An apartment in the castle. GOLAUD discovered, stretched upon his bed; MÉLISANDE, by his bedside.*

Golaud. Ah! ah! all goes well; it will amount to nothing. But I cannot understand how it came to pass. I was hunting quietly in the forest. All at once my horse ran away, without cause. Did he see anything unusual? . . . I had just heard the twelve strokes of noon. At the twelfth stroke he suddenly took fright and ran like a blind madman against a tree. I heard no more. I do not yet know what happened. I fell, and he must have fallen on me. I thought I had the whole forest on my breast; I thought my heart was crushed. But my heart is sound. It is nothing, apparently. . . .

Mélisande. Would you like a little water?

Golaud. Thanks, thanks; I am not thirsty.

Mélisande. Would you like another pillow? . . . There is a little spot of blood on this.

Golaud. No, no; it is not worth while. I bled at the mouth just now. I shall bleed again, perhaps. . . .

Mélisande. Are you quite sure? . . . You are not suffering too much?

Golaud. No, no; I have seen a good many more like this. I was made of iron and blood. . . . These are not the little bones of a child; do not alarm yourself. . . .

Mélisande. Close your eyes and try to sleep. I shall stay here all night. . . .

Golaud. No, no; I do not wish you to tire yourself so. I do not need anything; I shall sleep like a child. . . . What is the matter, *Mélisande*? Why do you weep all at once?

Mélisande [*bursting into tears*]. I am . . . I am ill too. . . .

Golaud. Thou art ill? . . . What ails thee, then; what ails thee, *Mélisande*? . . .

Mélisande. I do not know. . . . I am ill here. . . . I had rather tell you to-day; my lord, my lord, I am not happy here. . . .

Golaud. Why, what has happened, *Mélisande*? What is it? . . . And I suspecting nothing. . . . What has happened? . . . Some one has done thee harm? . . . Some one has given thee offense?

Mélisande. No, no; no one has done me the least harm. . . . It is not that. . . . It is not that. . . . But I can live here no longer. I do not know why. . . . I would go away, go away! . . . I shall die if I am left here. . . .

Golaud. But something has happened? You must be hiding something from me? . . . Tell me the whole truth, *Mélisande*. . . . Is it the King? . . . Is it my mother? . . . Is it *Pelléas*? . . .

Mélisande. No, no; it is not *Pelléas*. It is not anybody. . . . You could not understand me. . . .

Golaud. Why should I not understand? . . . If you tell me nothing, what will you have me do? . . . Tell me everything and I shall understand everything.

Mélisande. I do not know myself what it is. . . . I do not know just what it is. . . . If I could tell you, I would tell you. . . . It is something stronger than I. . . .

Golaud. Come; be reasonable, *Mélisande*.—What would you have me do?—You are no longer a child.—Is it I whom you would leave?

Mélisande. Oh! no, no; it is not that. . . . I would go away with you. . . . It is here that I can live no longer. . . . I feel that I shall not live a long while. . . .

Golaud. But there must be a reason, nevertheless. You will be thought mad. It will be thought child's dreams.—Come, is it *Pelléas*, perhaps?—I think he does not often speak to you.

Mélisande. Yes, yes; he speaks to me sometimes. I think he does not like me; I have seen it in his eyes. . . . But he speaks to me when he meets me. . . .

Golaud. You must not take it ill of him

He has always been so. He is a little strange. And just now he is sad; he thinks of his friend Marcellus, who is at the point of death, and whom he cannot go to see. . . . He will change, he will change, you will see; he is young. . . .

Mélisande. But it is not that . . . it is not that. . . .

Golaud. What is it, then?—Can you not get used to the life one leads here? Is it too gloomy here?—It is true the castle is very old and very somber. . . . It is very cold, and very deep. And all those who dwell in it are already old. And the country may seem gloomy too, with all its forests, all its old forests without light. But that may all be enlivened if we will. And then, joy, joy, one does not have it every day; we must take things as they come. But tell me something; no matter what; I will do everything you could wish. . . .

Mélisande. Yes, yes; it is true. . . . You never see the sky here. I saw it for the first time this morning. . . .

Golaud. It is that, then, that makes you weep, my poor *Mélisande*?—It is only that, then?—You weep, not to see the sky?—Come, come, you are no longer at the age when one may weep for such things. . . . And then, is not the summer yonder? You will see the sky every day.—And then, next year. . . . Come, give me your hand; give me both your little hands. [*He takes her hands.*] Oh! oh! these little hands that I could crush like flowers. . . .—Hold! where is the ring I gave you?

Mélisande. The ring?

Golaud. Yes; our wedding-ring, where is it?

Mélisande. I think . . . I think it has fallen. . . .

Golaud. Fallen?—Where has it fallen?—You have not lost it?

Mélisande. No, no; it fell . . . it must have fallen . . . but I know where it is. . . .

Golaud. Where is it?

Mélisande. You know . . . you know well . . . the grotto by the seashore? . . .

Golaud. Yes.

Mélisande. Well then, it is there. . . . It must be it is there. . . . Yes, yes; I remember. . . . I went there this morning to pick up shells for little *Yniold*. . . . There were some very fine ones. . . . It slipped from my finger . . . then the sea came in; and I had to go out before I had found it.

Golaud. Are you sure it is there?

Mélisande. Yes, yes; quite sure. . . . I felt it slip . . . then, all at once, the noise of the waves. . . .

Golaud. You must go look for it at once.

Mélisande. I must go look for it at once?

Golaud. Yes.

Mélisande. Now?—at once?—in the dark?

Golaud. Now, at once, in the dark. You must go look for it at once. I had rather have lost all I have than have lost that ring. You do not know what it is. You do not know whence it came. The sea will be very high to-night. The sea will come to take it before you. . . . Make haste. You must go look for it at once. . . .

Mélisande. I dare not. . . . I dare not go alone. . . .

Golaud. Go, go with no matter whom. But you must go at once, do you understand?—Make haste; ask *Pelléas* to go with you.

Mélisande. *Pelléas*?—With *Pelléas*?—But *Pelléas* would not. . . .

Golaud. *Pelléas* will do all you ask of him. I know *Pelléas* better than you do. Go, go; hurry! I shall not sleep until I have the ring.

Mélisande. Oh! oh! I am not happy! . . . I am not happy! . . . [*Exit, weeping.*]

SCENE THREE—Before a grotto.

[*Enter PELLÉAS and MÉLISANDE.*]

Pelléas [*speaking with great agitation*] Yes; it is here; we are there. It is so dark you cannot tell the entrance of the grotto from the rest of the night. . . . There are no stars on this side. Let us wait till the moon has torn through that great cloud; it will light up the whole grotto, and then we can enter without danger. There are dangerous places, and the path is very narrow between two lakes whose bottom has not yet been found. I did not think to bring a torch or a lantern, but I think the light of the sky will be enough for us.—You have never gone into this grotto?

Mélisande. No. . . .

Pelléas. Let us go in; let us go in. . . . You must be able to describe the place where you lost the ring, if he questions you. . . . It is very big and very beautiful. There are stalactites that look like plants and men. It is full of blue darks. It has not been explored to the end. There are great treasures hidden there; it seems. You will see the remains of ancient shipwrecks there. But you must not

go far in it without a guide. There have been some who never have come back. I myself dare not go forward too far. We will stop the moment we no longer see the light of the sea or the sky. When you strike a little light there, you would say the vault was covered with stars like the sky. It is bits of crystal or salt, they say, that shine so in the rock.—Look, look, I think the sky is going to clear. . . . Give me your hand; do not tremble, do not tremble so. There is no danger; we will stop the moment we no longer see the light of the sea. . . . Is it the noise of the grotto that frightens you? It is the noise of night or the noise of silence. . . . Do you hear the sea behind us?—It does not seem happy to-night. . . . Ah! look, the light! . . .

[The moon lights up abundantly the entrance and part of the darkness of the grotto; and at a certain depth are seen three old beggars with white hair, seated side by side, leaning upon each other and asleep against a boulder.]

Mélisande. Ah!

Pelléas. What is it?

Mélisande. There are . . . there are. . . .

[She points out the three beggars.]

Pelléas. Yes, yes; I have seen them too. . . .

Mélisande. Let us go! . . . Let us go! . . .

Pelléas. Yes . . . it is three old poor men fallen asleep. . . . There is a famine in the country. . . . Why have they come to sleep here? . . .

Mélisande. Let us go! . . . Come, come. . . . Let us go! . . .

Pelléas. Take care; do not speak so loud. . . . Let us not wake them. . . . They are still sleeping heavily. . . . Come.

Mélisande. Leave me, leave me; I prefer to walk alone. . . .

Pelléas. We will come back another day. *[Exeunt.]*

SCENE FOUR—*An apartment in the castle. ARKËL AND PELLÉAS discovered.*

Arkël. You see that everything retains you here just now and forbids you this useless journey. We have concealed your father's condition from you until now; but it is perhaps hopeless; and that alone should suffice to stop you on the threshold. But there are so many other reasons. . . . And it is not in the day when our enemies awake, and when the

people are dying of hunger and murmur about us, that you have the right to desert us. And why this journey? Marcellus is dead; and life has graver duties than the visit to a tomb. You are weary, you say, of your inactive life; but activity and duty are not found on the highways. They must be waited for upon the threshold, and let in as they go by; and they go by every day. You have never seen them? I hardly see them any more myself; but I will teach you to see them, and I will point them out to you the day when you would make them a sign. Nevertheless, listen to me; if you believe it is from the depths of your life this journey is exacted, I do not forbid your undertaking it, for you must know better than I the events you must offer to your being or your fate. I shall ask you only to wait until we know what must take place ere long. . . .

Pelléas. How long must I wait?

Arkël. A few weeks; perhaps a few days. . . .

Pelléas. I will wait. . . .

ACT THREE

SCENE ONE—*An apartment in the castle. PELLÉAS and MÉLISANDE discovered. MÉLISANDE plies her distaff at the back of the room.*

Pelléas. Yniold does not come back; where has he gone?

Mélisande. He has heard something in the corridor; he has gone to see what it is.

Pelléas. Mélisande . . .

Mélisande. What is it?

Pelléas. . . . Can you see still to work there?

Mélisande. I work as well in the dark. . . .

Pelléas. I think everybody is already asleep in the castle. Golaud does not come back from the chase. It is late, nevertheless. . . . He no longer suffers from his fall?

Mélisande. He said he no longer suffered from it.

Pelléas. He must be more prudent; his body is no longer as supple as at twenty years. . . . I see the stars through the window and the light of the moon on the trees. It is late; he will not come back now. *[Knocking at the door.]* Who is there? . . . Come in! . . .

[Little YNIOLD opens the door and enters the room.]

It was you knocking so? . . . That is not

the way to knock at doors. It is as if a misfortune had arrived; look, you have frightened little mother.

Yniold. I only knocked a tiny little bit.

Pelléas. It is late; little father will not come back to-night; it is time for you to go to bed.

Yniold. I shall not go to bed before you do.

Pelléas. What? . . . What is that you are saying?

Yniold. I say . . . not before you . . . not before you . . .

[Bursts into sobs and takes refuge by MÉLISANDE.]

Mélisande. What is it, Yniold? . . . What is it? why do you weep all at once?

Yniold [sobbing]. Because . . . oh! oh! because . . .

Mélisande. Because what? . . . Because what? . . . Tell me . . .

Yniold. Little mother . . . little mother . . . you are going away. . . .

Mélisande. But what has taken hold of you, Yniold? . . . I have never dreamed of going away. . . .

Yniold. Yes, you have; yes, you have; little father has gone away. . . . Little father does not come back, and you are going to go away too. . . . I have seen it . . . I have seen it. . . .

Mélisande. But there has never been any idea of that, Yniold. . . . Why, what makes you think that I would go away? . . .

Yniold. I have seen it . . . I have seen it. . . . You have said things to uncle that I could not hear . . .

Pelléas. He is sleepy. . . . He has been dreaming. . . . Come here, Yniold; asleep already? . . . Come and look out at the window; the swans are fighting with the dogs. . . .

Yniold [at the window]. Oh! oh! they are chasing the dogs! . . . They are chasing them! . . . Oh! oh! the water! . . . the wings! . . . the wings! . . . they are afraid. . . .

Pelléas [coming back by MÉLISANDE]. He is sleepy; he is struggling against sleep; his eyes were closing. . . .

Mélisande [singing softly as she spins].

Saint Daniel and Saint Michaël. . . .

Saint Michaël and Saint Raphaël. . . .

Yniold [at the window]. Oh! oh! little mother! . . .

Mélisande [rising abruptly]. What is it, Yniold? . . . What is it? . . .

Yniold. I saw something at the window!

[PELLÉAS and MÉLISANDE run to the window.]

Pelléas. What is there at the window?

. . . What have you seen? . . .

Yniold. Oh! oh! I saw something! . . .

Pelléas. But there is nothing. I see nothing. . . .

Mélisande. Nor I. . . .

Pelléas. Where did you see something? Which way? . . .

Yniold. Down there, down there! . . . It is no longer there. . . .

Pelléas. He does not know what he is saying. He must have seen the light of the moon on the forest. There are often strange reflections . . . or else something must have passed on the highway . . . or in his sleep. For see, see, I believe he is quite asleep. . . .

Yniold [at the window]. Little father is there! little father is there!

Pelléas [going to the window]. He is right; Golaud is coming into the courtyard.

Yniold. Little father! . . . little father! . . . I am going to meet him! . . . *[Exit, running.—A silence.]*

Pelléas. They are coming up the stair.

[Enter GOLAUD and little YNIOLD with a lamp.]

Golaud. You are still waiting in the dark?

Yniold. I have brought a light, little mother, a big light! . . . *[He lifts the lamp and looks at MÉLISANDE.]* You have been weeping, little mother? . . . You have been weeping? . . . *[He lifts the lamp toward PELLÉAS and looks in turn at him.]* You too, you too, you have been weeping? . . . Little father, look, little father; they have both been weeping. . . .

Golaud. Do not hold the light under their eyes so. . . .

SCENE TWO—*One of the towers of the castle. A watchman's round passes under a window in the tower.*

Mélisande [at the window, combing her unbound hair].

My long locks fall foaming

To the threshold of the tower,—

My locks await your coming

All along the tower,

And all the long, long hour,

And all the long, long hour.

Saint Daniel and Saint Michaël,

Saint Michaël and Saint Raphaël.

I was born on a Sunday,
A Sunday at high noon. . . .

[Enter PELLÉAS by the watchman's round.]

Pelléas. Holà! Holà! ho! . . .

Mélisande. Who is there?

Pelléas. I, I, and I! . . . What art thou doing there at the window, singing like a bird that is not native here?

Mélisande. I am doing my hair for the night. . . .

Pelléas. Is it that I see upon the wall? . . . I thought you had some light. . . .

Mélisande. I have opened the window; it is too hot in the tower. . . . It is beautiful to-night. . . .

Pelléas. There are innumerable stars; I have never seen so many as to-night; . . . but the moon is still upon the sea. . . . Do not stay in the shadow, Mélisande; lean forward a little till I see your unbound hair. . . .

Mélisande. I am frightful so. . . . [She leans out at the window.]

Pelléas. Oh! oh! Mélisande! . . . oh, thou art beautiful! . . . thou art beautiful so! . . . Lean out! lean out! . . . Let me come nearer thee. . . .

Mélisande. I cannot come nearer thee. . . . I am leaning out as far as I can. . . .

Pelléas. I cannot come up higher; . . . give me at least thy hand to-night . . . before I go away. . . . I leave to-morrow. . . .

Mélisande. No, no, no! . . .

Pelléas. Yes, yes, yes; I leave, I shall leave to-morrow. . . . Give me thy hand, thy hand, thy little hand upon my lips. . . .

Mélisande. I give thee not my hand if thou wilt leave. . . .

Pelléas. Give, give, give! . . .

Mélisande. Thou wilt not leave?

Pelléas. I will wait; I will wait. . . .

Mélisande. I see a rose in the shadows.

Pelléas. Where? . . . I see only the boughs of the willow hanging over the wall. . . .

Mélisande. Farther down, farther down, in the garden; farther down, in the somber green. . . .

Pelléas. It is not a rose. . . . I will go see by and by, but give me thy hand first; first thy hand. . . .

Mélisande. There, there; . . . I cannot lean out farther. . . .

Pelléas. I cannot reach thy hand with my lips. . . .

Mélisande. I cannot lean out farther.

. . . I am on the point of falling. . . . —Oh! oh! my hair is falling down the tower! [Her tresses fall suddenly over her head, as she is leaning out so, and stream over PELLÉAS.]

Pelléas. Oh! oh! what is it? . . . Thy hair, thy hair is falling down to me! . . . All thy locks, Mélisande, all thy locks have fallen down the tower! . . . I hold them in my hands; I hold them in my mouth. . . . I hold them in my arms; I put them about my neck. . . . I will not open my hands again to-night. . . .

Mélisande. Let me go! let me go! . . . Thou wilt make me fall! . . .

Pelléas. No, no, no; . . . I have never seen such hair as thine, Mélisande! . . . See, see, see; it comes from so high and yet it floods me to the heart! . . . And yet it floods me to the knees! . . . And it is sweet, sweet as if it fell from heaven! . . . I see the sky no longer through thy locks. Thou seest, thou seest? . . . I can no longer hold them with both hands; there are some on the boughs of the willow. . . . They are alive like birds in my hands, . . . and they love me, they love me more than thou! . . .

Mélisande. Let me go; let me go! . . . Some one might come. . . .

Pelléas. No, no, no; I shall not set thee free to-night. . . . Thou art my prisoner to-night; all night, all night! . . .

Mélisande. Pelléas! Pelléas! . . .

Pelléas. I tie them, I tie them to the willow boughs. . . . Thou shalt not go away now; . . . thou shalt not go away now. . . . Look, look, I am kissing thy hair. . . . I suffer no more in the midst of thy hair. . . . Hearest thou my kisses along thy hair? . . . They mount along thy hair. . . . Each hair must bring thee some. . . . Thou seest, thou seest, I can open my hands. . . . My hands are free, and thou canst not leave me now. . . .

Mélisande. Oh! oh! thou hurtest me. . . . [Doves come out of the tower and fly about them in the night.]—What is that, Pelléas?—What is it flying about me?

Pelléas. It is the doves coming out of the tower. . . . I have frightened them; they are flying away. . . .

Mélisande. It is my doves, Pelléas.—Let us go away, let me go; they will not come back again. . . .

Pelléas. Why will they not come back again?

Mélisande. They will be lost in the dark. . . . Let me go; let me lift my head. . . . I hear a noise of footsteps. . . . Let me go!—It is Golaud! . . . I believe it is Golaud! . . . He has heard us. . . .

Pelléas. Wait! Wait! . . . Thy hair is about the boughs. . . . It is caught there in the darkness. . . . Wait, wait! . . . It is dark.

[*Enter GOLAUD, by the watchman's round.*]

Golaud. What do you here?

Pelléas. What do I here? . . . I . . .

Golaud. You are children. . . . *Mélisande*, do not lean out so at the window; you will fall. . . . Do you not know it is late? It is nearly midnight.—Do not play so in the darkness.—You are children. . . . [*Laughing nervously.*] What children! . . . What children! . . . [*Exit, with PELLÉAS.*]

SCENE THREE—*The vaults of the castle.*

[*Enter GOLAUD and PELLÉAS.*]

Golaud. Take care; this way, this way.—You have never penetrated into these vaults?

Pelléas. Yes; once, of old; but it was long ago. . . .

Golaud. They are prodigious great; it is a succession of enormous crypts that end, God knows where. The whole castle is builded on these crypts. Do you smell the deathly odor that reigns here?—That is what I wished to show you. In my opinion, it comes from the little underground lake I am going to have you see. Take care; walk before me, in the light of my lantern. I will warn you when we are there. [*They continue to walk in silence.*] Hey! hey! *Pelléas!* stop! stop! [*He seizes him by the arm.*] For God's sake! . . . Do you not see?—One step more, and you had been in the gulf! . . .

Pelléas. But I did not see it! . . . The lantern no longer lighted me. . . .

Golaud. I made a misstep . . . but if I had not held you by the arm . . . Well, this is the stagnant water that I spoke of to you. . . . Do you perceive the smell of death that rises?—Let us go to the end of this overhanging rock, and do you lean over a little. It will strike you in the face.

Pelléas. I smell it already; . . . you would say a smell of the tomb.

Golaud. Farther, farther. . . . It is this that on certain days has poisoned the castle. The King will not believe it comes from here.—The crypt should be walled up in

which this standing water is found. It is time, besides, to examine these vaults a little. Have you noticed those lizards on the walls and pillars of the vaults?—There is a labor hidden here you would not suspect; and the whole castle will be swallowed up one of these nights, if it is not looked out for. But what will you have? Nobody likes to come down this far. . . . There are strange lizards in many of the walls. . . . Oh! here . . . do you perceive the smell of death that rises?

Pelléas. Yes; there is a smell of death rising about us. . . .

Golaud. Lean over; have no fear. . . . I will hold you . . . give me . . . no, no, not your hand . . . it might slip . . . your arm, your arm! . . . Do you see the gulf? [*Moved.*]—*Pelléas?* *Pelléas?* . . .

Pelléas. Yes; I think I see the bottom of the gulf. . . . Is it the light that trembles so? . . . You . . . [*He straightens up, turns, and looks at GOLAUD.*]

Golaud [*with a trembling voice*]. Yes; it is the lantern. . . . See, I shook it to lighten the walls. . . .

Pelléas. I stifle here; . . . let us go out. . . .

Golaud. Yes; let us go out. . . .

[*Exeunt in silence.*]

SCENE FOUR—*A terrace at the exit of the vaults.*

[*Enter GOLAUD and PELLÉAS.*]

Pelléas. Ah! I breathe at last! . . . I thought, one moment, I was going to be ill in those enormous crypts; I was on the point of falling. . . . There is a damp air there, heavy as a leaden dew, and darkness thick as a poisoned paste. . . . And now, all the air of all the sea! . . . There is a fresh wind, see; fresh as a leaf that has just opened, over the little green waves. . . . Hold! the flowers have just been watered at the foot of the terrace, and the smell of the verdure and the wet roses comes up to us. . . . It must be nearly noon; they are already in the shadow of the tower. . . . It is noon; I hear the bells ringing, and the children are going down to the beach to bathe. . . . I did not know that we had stayed so long in the caverns. . . .

Golaud. We went down toward eleven o'clock. . . .

Pelléas. Earlier; it must have been earlier; I heard it strike half past ten.

Golaud. Half past ten or a quarter to eleven. . . .

Pelléas. They have opened all the windows of the castle. It will be unusually hot this afternoon. . . . Look, there is mother with Mélisande at a window of the tower. . . .

Golaud. Yes; they have taken refuge on the shady side.—Speaking of Mélisande, I heard what passed and what was said last night. I am quite aware all that is but child's play; but it need not be repeated. Mélisande is very young and very impressionable; and she must be treated the more circumspectly that she is perhaps with child at this moment. . . . She is very delicate, hardly woman; and the least emotion might bring on a mishap. It is not the first time I have noticed there might be something between you. . . . You are older than she; it will suffice to have told you. . . . Avoid her as much as possible; without affectation, moreover; without affectation. . . .—What is it I see yonder on the highway toward the forest? . . .

Pelléas. Some herds they are leading to the city. . . .

Golaud. They cry like lost children; you would say they smelt the butcher already.—It will be time for dinner.—What a fine day! What a capital day for the harvest! . . .

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE FIVE—*Before the castle.*

[*Enter GOLAUD and little YNIOLD.*]

Golaud. Come, we are going to sit down here, Yniold; sit on my knee; we shall see from here what passes in the forest. I do not see you any more at all now. You abandon me too; you are always at little mother's. . . . Why, we are sitting just under little mother's windows.—Perhaps she is saying her evening prayer at this moment. . . . But tell me, Yniold, she is often with your uncle Pelléas, isn't she?

Yniold. Yes, yes; always, little father; when you are not there, little father. . . .

Golaud. Ah!—Look; some one is going by with a lantern in the garden.—But I have been told they did not like each other. . . . It seems they often quarrel; . . . no? Is it true?

Yniold. Yes, yes; it is true.

Golaud. Yes?—Ah! ah!—But what do they quarrel about?

Yniold. About the door.

Golaud. What?—about the door?—What

are you talking about?—No, come, explain yourself; why do they quarrel about the door?

Yniold. Because it won't stay open.

Golaud. Who wants it to stay open?—Come, why do they quarrel?

Yniold. I don't know, little father; about the light.

Golaud. I am not talking to you about the light; we will talk of that by and by. I am talking to you about the door. Answer what I ask you; you must learn to talk; it is time. . . . Do not put your hand in your mouth so; . . . come. . . .

Yniold. Little father! little father! . . . I won't do it any more. . . . [*He cries.*]

Golaud. Come; what are you crying for now? What has happened?

Yniold. Oh! oh! little father, you hurt me.

Golaud. I hurt you?—Where did I hurt you? I did not mean to. . . .

Yniold. Here, here; on my little arm. . . .

Golaud. I did not mean to; come, don't cry any more, and I will give you something to-morrow.

Yniold. What, little father?

Golaud. A quiver and some arrows; but tell me what you know about the door.

Yniold. Big arrows?

Golaud. Yes, yes; very big arrows.—But why don't they want the door to be open?—Come, answer me sometime!—No, no; do not open your mouth to cry. I am not angry. We are going to have a quiet talk, like Pelléas and little mother when they are together. What do they talk about when they are together?

Yniold. Pelléas and little mother?

Golaud. Yes; what do they talk about?

Yniold. About me; always about me.

Golaud. And what do they say about you?

Yniold. They say I am going to be very big.

Golaud. Oh, plague of my life! . . . I am here like a blind man searching for his treasure at the bottom of the ocean! . . . I am here like a new-born child lost in the forest, and you . . . Come, come, Yniold, I was wandering; we are going to talk seriously. Do Pelléas and little mother never speak of me when I am not there? . . .

Yniold. Yes, yes, little father; they are always speaking of you.

Golaud. Ah! . . . And what do they say of me?

Yniold. They say I shall grow as big as you are.

Golaud. You are always by them?

Yniold. Yes, yes, always, always, little father.

Golaud. They never tell you to go play somewhere else?

Yniold. No, little father; they are afraid when I am not there.

Golaud. They are afraid? . . . What makes you think they are afraid?

Yniold. Little mother always says, "Don't go away; don't go away!" . . . They are unhappy, but they laugh. . . .

Golaud. But that does not prove they are afraid.

Yniold. Yes, yes, little father; she is afraid. . . .

Golaud. Why do you say she is afraid?

Yniold. They always weep in the dark.

Golaud. Ah! ah! . . .

Yniold. That makes one weep too.

Golaud. Yes, yes! . . .

Yniold. She is pale, little father.

Golaud. Ah! ah! . . . patience, my God, patience! . . .

Yniold. What, little father?

Golaud. Nothing, nothing, my child.—I saw a wolf go by in the forest.—Then they get on well together?—I am glad to learn they are on good terms.—They kiss each other sometimes?—No? . . .

Yniold. Kiss each other, little father?—No, no,—ah! yes, little father, yes, yes; once . . . once when it rained. . . .

Golaud. They kissed?—But how, how did they kiss?

Yniold. So, little father, so! . . . [*He gives him a kiss on the mouth, laughing.*] Ah! ah! your beard, little father! . . . It pricks! it pricks! it pricks! It is getting all gray, little father, and your hair, too; all gray, all gray, all gray. . . . [*The window under which they are sitting is lighted up at this moment, and the light falls upon them.*] Ah! ah! little mother has lit her lamp. It is light, little father; it is light. . . .

Golaud. Yes; it is beginning to be light.

Yniold. Let us go there, too, little father; let us go there, too. . . .

Golaud. Where do you want to go?

Yniold. Where it is light, little father.

Golaud. No, no, my child; let us stay in the dark a little longer. . . . One cannot tell, one cannot tell yet. . . . Do you see those

poor people down there trying to kindle a little fire in the forest?—It has rained. And over there, do you see the old gardener trying to lift that tree the wind has blown down across the road?—He cannot; the tree is too big; the tree is too heavy, and it will lie where it fell. All that cannot be helped. . . . I think Pelléas is mad. . . .

Yniold. No, little father, he is not mad; he is very good.

Golaud. Do you want to see little mother?

Yniold. Yes, yes; I want to see her!

Golaud. Don't make any noise; I am going to hoist you up to the window. It is too high for me, for all I am so big. . . . [*He lifts the child.*] Do not make the least noise; little mother would be terribly afraid. . . . Do you see her?—Is she in the room?

Yniold. Yes. . . . Oh, how light it is!

Golaud. She is alone?

Yniold. Yes; . . . no, no: Uncle Pelléas is there, too.

Golaud. He— . . . !

Yniold. Ah! ah! little father! you have hurt me! . . .

Golaud. It is nothing; be still; I will not do it any more; look, look, Yniold! . . . I stumbled; speak lower. What are they doing?—

Yniold. They are not doing anything, little father; they are waiting for something.

Golaud. Are they near each other?

Yniold. No, little father.

Golaud. And . . . and the bed? Are they near the bed?

Yniold. The bed, little father?—I can't see the bed.

Golaud. Lower, lower; they will hear you. Are they speaking?

Yniold. No, little father; they do not speak.

Golaud. But what are they doing?—They must be doing something. . . .

Yniold. They are looking at the light.

Golaud. Both?

Yniold. Yes, little father.

Golaud. They do not say anything?

Yniold. No, little father; they do not close their eyes.

Golaud. They do not come near each other?

Yniold. No, little father; they do not stir.

Golaud. They are sitting down?

Yniold. No, little father; they are standing upright against the wall.

Golaud. They make no gestures?—They

do not look at each other?—They make no signs? . . .

Yniold. No, little father.—Oh! oh! little father; they never close their eyes. . . . I am terribly afraid. . . .

Golaud. Be still. They do not stir yet?

Yniold. No, little father.—I am afraid, little father; let me come down! . . .

Golaud. Why, what are you afraid of?—Look! look! . . .

Yniold. I dare not look any more, little father! . . . Let me come down! . . .

Golaud. Look! look! . . .

Yniold. Oh! oh! I am going to cry, little father!—Let me come down! let me come down! . . .

Golaud. Come; we will go see what has happened. [*Exeunt.*]

ACT FOUR

SCENE ONE—*A corridor in the castle.*

[*Enter PELLÉAS and MÉLISANDE, meeting.*]

Pelléas. Where goest thou? I must speak to thee to-night. Shall I see thee?

Mélisande. Yes.

Pelléas. I have just left my father's room. He is getting better. The physician has told us he is saved. . . . And yet this morning I had a presentiment this day would end ill. I have had a rumor of misfortune in my ears for some time. . . . Then, all at once there was a great change; to-day it is no longer anything but a question of time. All the windows in his room have been thrown open. He speaks; he seems happy. He does not speak yet like an ordinary man, but already his ideas no longer all come from the other world. . . . He recognized me. He took my hand and said with that strange air he has had since he fell sick: "Is it thou, Pelléas? Why, why, I had not noticed it before, but thou hast the grave and friendly look of those who will not live long. . . . You must travel; you must travel. . . ." It is strange; I shall obey him. . . . My mother listened to him and wept for joy.—Hast thou not been aware of it?—The whole house seems already to revive, you hear breathing, you hear speaking, you hear walking. . . . Listen; I hear some one speaking behind that door. Quick, quick! answer quickly! where shall I see thee?

Mélisande. Where wouldst thou?

Pelléas. In the park; near "Blind Man's Spring."—Wilt thou?—Wilt thou come?

Mélisande. Yes.

Pelléas. It will be the last night;—I am going to travel, as my father said. Thou wilt not see me more. . . .

Mélisande. Do not say that, Pelléas. . . . I shall see thee always; I shall look upon thee always. . . .

Pelléas. Thou wilt look in vain. . . . I shall be so far away thou couldst no longer see me. . . . I shall try to go very far away. . . . I am full of joy, and you would say I had all the weight of heaven and earth on my body to-day. . . .

Mélisande. What has happened, Pelléas?—I no longer understand what you say. . . .

Pelléas. Go, go; let us separate. I hear some one speaking behind that door. . . . It is the strangers who came to the castle this morning. . . . They are going out. . . . Let us go; it is the strangers. . . .

[*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE TWO—*An apartment in the castle.*

ARKËL and MÉLISANDE discovered.

Arkël. Now that Pelléas's father is saved, and sickness, the old handmaid of Death, has left the castle, a little joy and a little sunlight will at last come into the house again. . . . It was time!—For, since thy coming, we have only lived here whispering about a closed room. . . . And truly I have pitied thee, Mélisande. . . . Thou camest here all joyous, like a child seeking a gala-day, and at the moment thou enteredst in the vestibule I saw thy face change, and probably thy soul, as the face changes in spite of us when we enter at noon into a grotto too gloomy and too cold. . . . And since,—since, on account of all that, I have often no longer understood thee. . . . I observed thee, thou wert there, listless, perhaps, but with the strange, astray look of one awaiting ever a great trouble, in the sunlight, in a beautiful garden. . . . I cannot explain. . . . But I was sad to see thee so; for thou art too young and too beautiful to live already day and night under the breath of death. . . . But now all that will change. At my age, —and there, perhaps, is the surest fruit of my life,—at my age I have gained I know not what faith in the fidelity of events, and I have always seen that every young and beautiful being creates about itself young, beautiful,

and happy events. . . . And it is thou who wilt now open the door for the new era I have glimpses of. . . . Come here; why dost thou stay there without answering and without lifting thine eyes?—I have kissed thee but once only hitherto—the day of thy coming; and yet old men need sometimes to touch with their lips a woman's forehead or a child's cheek, to believe still in the freshness of life and avert awhile the menaces. . . . Art thou afraid of my old lips? How I have pitied thee these months! . . .

Mélsande. Grandfather, I have not been unhappy. . . .

Arkël. Perhaps you were of those who are unhappy without knowing it, . . . and they are the most unhappy. . . . Let me look at thee, so, quite near, a moment; . . . we have such need of beauty beside Death. . . .

[*Enter GOLAUD.*]

Golaud. Pelléas leaves to-night.

Arkël. Thou hast blood on thy forehead.—What hast thou done?

Golaud. Nothing, nothing. . . . I have passed through a hedge of thorns.

Mélsande. Bend down your head a little, my lord. . . . I will wipe your forehead. . . .

Golaud [repulsing her]. I will not that you touch me, do you understand? Go, go!—I am not speaking to you.—Where is my sword?—I came to seek my sword. . . .

Mélsande. Here; on the praying-stool.

Golaud. Bring it. [*To ARKËL.*] They have just found another peasant dead of hunger, along by the sea. You would say they all meant to die under our eyes. [*To MÉLISANDE.*] Well, my sword?—Why do you tremble so?—I am not going to kill you. I would simply examine the blade. I do not employ the sword for these uses. Why do you examine me like a beggar?—I do not come to ask alms of you. You hope to see something in my eyes without my seeing anything in yours?—Do you think I may know something? [*To ARKËL.*]—Do you see those great eyes?—It is as if they were proud of their richness. . . .

Arkël. I see there only a great innocence. . . .

Golaud. A great innocence! . . . They are greater than innocence. . . . They are purer than the eyes of a lamb. . . . They would give God lessons in innocence! A great innocence! Listen: I am so near them I feel the freshness of their lashes when they wink; and yet I am less far away from the great secrets

of the other world than from the smallest secret of those eyes! . . . A great innocence! . . . More than innocence! You would say the angels of heaven celebrated there an eternal baptism! . . . I know those eyes! I have seen them at their work! Close them! close them! or I shall close them for a long while! . . . Do not put your right hand to your throat so; I am saying a very simple thing. . . . I have no under-thought. . . . If I had an under-thought, why should I not say it? Ah! ah!—Do not attempt to flee!—Here!—Give me that hand!—Ah! your hands are too hot. . . . Go away! Your flesh disgusts me! . . . Here!—There is no more question of fleeing now! [*He seizes her by the hair.*] You shall follow me on your knees!—On your knees!—On your knees before me!—Ah! ah! your long hair serves some purpose at last! . . . Right, . . . left!—Left, . . . right!—Absalom! Absalom.—Forward! back! To the ground! to the ground! . . . You see, you see; I laugh already like an old man. . . .

Arkël [running up]. Golaud! . . .

Golaud [affecting a sudden calm]. You will do as you may please, look you.—I attach no importance to that.—I am too old; and, besides, I am not a spy. I shall await chance; and then . . . Oh! then! . . . simply because it is the custom; simply because it is the custom. . . . [*Exit.*]

Arkël. What ails him?—He is drunk?

Mélsande [in tears]. No, no; he does not love me any more. . . . I am not happy! . . . I am not happy! . . .

Arkël. If I were God, I would have pity on men's hearts. . . .

SCENE THREE—*A terrace of the castle. Little YNIOLD discovered, trying to lift a boulder.*

Yniold. Oh, this stone is heavy! . . . It is heavier than I am. . . . It is heavier than everybody. . . . It is heavier than everything that ever happened. . . . I can see my golden ball between the rock and this naughty stone, and I cannot reach it. . . . My little arm is not long enough, . . . and this stone won't be lifted. . . . I can't lift it, . . . and nobody could lift it. . . . It is heavier than the whole house; . . . you would think it had roots in the earth. . . . [*The bleatings of a flock heard far away.*]—Oh! oh! I hear the sheep crying. . . . [*He goes to look, at the edge of the terrace.*] Why! there is no more sun. . . . They are coming . . . the little sheep . . . they are com-

ing. . . . There is a lot of them! . . . There is a lot of them! . . . They are afraid of the dark. . . . They crowd together! They crowd together! . . . They can hardly walk any more. . . . They are crying! They are crying! And they go quick! . . . They go quick! . . . They are already at the great crossroads. Ah! ah! They don't know where they ought to go any more. . . . They don't cry any more. . . . They wait. . . . Some of them want to go to the right. . . . They all want to go to the right. . . . They cannot! . . . The shepherd is throwing earth at them. . . . Ah! ah! They are going to pass by here. . . . They obey! They obey! They are going to pass under the terrace. . . . They are going to pass under the rocks. I am going to see them near by. . . . Oh! oh! what a lot of them! . . . What a lot of them! The whole road is full of them! . . . They all keep still now. . . . Shepherd! shepherd! why don't they speak any more?

The Shepherd [who is out of sight]. Because it is no longer the road to the stable. . . .

Ynold. Where are they going?—Shepherd! shepherd!—Where are they going?—He doesn't hear me any more. They are too far away already. . . . They go quick. . . . They are not making a noise any more. . . . It is no longer the road to the stable. . . . Where are they going to sleep to-night?—Oh! oh!—It is too dark. . . . I am going to tell something to somebody. . . . [*Exit.*]

SCENE FOUR—*A fountain in the park.*

[*Enter PELLÉAS.*]

Pelléas. It is the last evening . . . the last evening. It must all end. I have played like a child about a thing I did not guess. . . . I have played a-dream about the snares of fate. . . . Who has awakened me all at once? I shall flee, crying out for joy and woe like a blind man fleeing from his burning house. . . . I am going to tell her I shall flee. . . . My father is out of danger; and I have no more reason to lie to myself. . . . It is late; she does not come. . . . I should do better to go away without seeing her again. . . . I must look well at her this time. . . . There are some things that I no longer recall. . . . It seems at times as if I had not seen her for a hundred years. . . . And I have not yet looked upon her look. . . . There remains nought to me if I go away thus. And all those memories . . . it is as if I were to take away a little water in

a muslin bag. . . . I must see her one last time, to the bottom of her heart. . . . I must tell her all that I have never told her.

[*Enter MÉLISANDE.*]

Mélisande. Pelléas!

Pelléas. Mélisande!—Is it thou, Mélisande?

Mélisande. Yes.

Pelléas. Come hither; do not stay at the edge of the moonlight.—Come hither. We have so many things to tell each other. . . . Come hither in the shadow of the linden.

Mélisande. Let me stay in the light. . . .

Pelléas. We might be seen from the windows of the tower. Come hither; here, we have nothing to fear.—Take care; we might be seen . . .

Mélisande. I wish to be seen. . . .

Pelléas. Why, what doth ail thee?—Thou wert able to come out without being seen?

Mélisande. Yes; your brother slept. . . .

Pelléas. It is late.—In an hour they will close the gates. We must be careful. Why art thou come so late?

Mélisande. Your brother had a bad dream. And then my gown was caught on the nails of the gate. See, it is torn. I lost all this time, and ran. . . .

Pelléas. My poor Mélisande! . . . I should almost be afraid to touch thee. . . . Thou art still out of breath, like a hunted bird. . . . It is for me, for me, thou doest all that? . . . I hear thy heart beat as if it were mine. . . . Come hither . . . nearer, nearer me.

Mélisande. Why do you laugh?

Pelléas. I do not laugh;—or else I laugh for joy, unwittingly. . . . It were a weeping matter, rather. . . .

Mélisande. We have come here before. . . . I recollect. . . .

Pelléas. Yes . . . yes . . . Long months ago.—I knew not then. . . . Knowest thou why I asked thee to come here to-night?

Mélisande. No.

Pelléas. It is perhaps the last time I shall see thee. . . . I must go away forever. . . .

Mélisande. Why sayest thou always thou wilt go away? . . .

Pelléas. I must tell thee what thou knowest already?—Thou knowest not what I am going to tell thee?

Mélisande. Why, no; why, no; I know nothing— . . .

Pelléas. Thou knowest not why I must go afar. . . . Thou knowest not it is because . . . [*He kisses her abruptly.*] I love thee. . . .

Mélisande [in a low voice]. I love thee, too. . . .

Pelléas. Oh! oh! What saidst thou, *Mélisande*? . . . I hardly heard it! . . . Thou sayest that in a voice coming from the end of the world! . . . I hardly heard thee. . . . Thou lovest me?—Thou lovest me, too? . . . Since when lovest thou me? . . .

Mélisande. Since always. . . . Since I saw thee. . . .

Pelléas. Oh, how thou sayest that! . . . Thy voice seems to have blown across the sea in spring! . . . I have never heard it until now; . . . one would say it had rained on my heart! . . . Thou sayest that so frankly! . . . Like an angel questioned! . . . I cannot believe it, *Mélisande*! . . . Why shouldst thou love me?—Nay, why dost thou love me?—Is what thou sayest true?—Thou dost not mock me?—Thou dost not lie a little, to make me smile? . . .

Mélisande. No; I never lie; I lie but to thy brother. . . .

Pelléas. Oh, how thou sayest that! . . . Thy voice! thy voice! . . . It is cooler and more frank than the water is! . . . It is like pure water on my lips! . . . It is like pure water on my hands. . . . Give me, give me thy hands! . . . Oh, how small thy hands are! . . . I did not know thou wert so beautiful! . . . I have never seen anything so beautiful before thee. . . . I was full of unrest; I sought throughout the house. . . . I sought throughout the country. . . . And I found not beauty. . . . And now I have found thee! . . . I have found thee! . . . I do not think there could be on the earth a fairer woman! . . . Where art thou?—I no longer hear thee breathe. . . .

Mélisande. Because I look on thee. . . .

Pelléas. Why dost thou look so gravely on me?—We are already in the shadow.—It is too dark under this tree.—Come into the light. We cannot see how happy we are. Come, come; so little time remains to us. . . .

Mélisande. No, no; let us stay here. . . . I am nearer thee in the dark. . . .

Pelléas. Where are thine eyes?—Thou art not going to fly me?—Thou dost not think of me just now.

Mélisande. Oh, yes; oh, yes; I only think of thee. . . .

Pelléas. Thou wert looking elsewhere. . . .

Mélisande. I saw thee elsewhere. . . .

Pelléas. Thy soul is far away. . . . What

ails thee, then?—Meseems thou art not happy. . . .

Mélisande. Yes, yes; I am happy, but I am sad. . . .

Pelléas. One is sad often when one loves. . . .

Mélisande. I weep always when I think of thee. . . .

Pelléas. I, too. . . . I, too, *Mélisande*. . . . I am quite near thee; I weep for joy, and yet . . . [He kisses her again.]—Thou art strange when I kiss thee so. . . . Thou art so beautiful that one would think thou wert about to die. . . .

Mélisande. Thou, too. . . .

Pelléas. There, there. . . . We do not what we will. . . . I did not love thee the first time I saw thee. . . .

Mélisande. Nor I . . . nor I. . . . I was afraid. . . .

Pelléas. I could not admit thine eyes. . . . I would have gone away at once . . . and then. . . .

Mélisande. And I—I would not have come. . . . I do not yet know why—I was afraid to come. . . .

Pelléas. There are so many things one never knows. We are ever waiting; and then. . . . What is that noise?—They are closing the gates! . . .

Mélisande. Yes, they have closed the gates. . . .

Pelléas. We cannot go back now!—Hearest thou the bolts?—Listen! Listen! . . . The great chains! . . . The great chains! . . . It is too late; it is too late! . . .

Mélisande. All the better! all the better! all the better! . . .

Pelléas. Thou— . . . ? Behold, behold! . . . It is no longer we who will it so! . . . All's lost, all's saved! All is saved to-night!—Come, come. . . . My heart beats like a madman,—up to my very throat. . . . [They embrace.] Listen! Listen! My heart is almost strangling me. . . . Come! come! . . . Ah, how beautiful it is in the shadows! . . .

Mélisande. There is some one behind us!

Pelléas. I see no one. . . .

Mélisande. I heard a noise. . . .

Pelléas. I hear only thy heart in the dark. . . .

Mélisande. I heard the crackling of dead leaves. . . .

Pelléas. Because the wind is silent all at once. . . . It fell as we were kissing. . . .

Mélisande. How long our shadows are to-night! . . .

Pelléas. They embrace to the very end of the garden. Oh, how they kiss far away from us! . . . Look! look! . . .

Mélisande [*in a stifled voice*]. A-a-h!—He is behind a tree!

Pelléas. Who?

Mélisande. Golaud!

Pelléas. Golaud!—Where?—I see nothing. . . .

Mélisande. There . . . at the end of our shadows. . . .

Pelléas. Yes, yes; I saw him. . . . Let us not turn abruptly. . . .

Mélisande. He has his sword. . . .

Pelléas. I have not mine. . . .

Mélisande. He saw us kiss. . . .

Pelléas. He does not know we have seen him. . . . Do not stir; do not turn your head. . . . He would rush headlong on us. . . . He will remain there while he thinks we do not know. He watches us. . . . He is still motionless. . . . Go, go at once this way. . . . I will wait for him. . . . I will stop him. . . .

Mélisande. No, no, no! . . .

Pelléas. Go! Go! He has seen all! . . . He will kill us! . . .

Mélisande. All the better! all the better! all the better! . . .

Pelléas. He comes! He comes! . . . Thy mouth! . . . Thy mouth! . . .

Mélisande. Yes! . . . yes! yes! . . .

[*They kiss desperately.*]

Pelléas. Oh! oh! All the stars are falling! . . .

Mélisande. Upon me, too! upon me, too!

Pelléas. Again! Again! . . . Give! Give!

Mélisande. All! all! all! . . .

[*GOLAUD rushes upon them, sword in hand, and strikes PELLÉAS, who falls at the brink of the fountain. MÉLISANDE flees terrified.*]

MÉLISANDE [*fleeing*]. Oh! oh! I have no courage! . . . I have no courage! . . .

[*GOLAUD pursues her through the wood in silence.*]

ACT FIVE

SCENE ONE—A lower hall in the castle. The women servants discovered, gathered together, while without children are playing before one of the ventilators of the hall.

An Old Servant. You will see, you will see, my daughters; it will be to-night.—Some one will come to tell us by and by. . . .

Another Servant. They will not come to tell us. . . . They don't know what they are doing any longer. . . .

Third Servant. Let us wait here. . . .

Fourth Servant. We shall know well enough when we must go up. . . .

Fifth Servant. When the time is come, we shall go up of ourselves. . . .

Sixth Servant. There is no longer a sound heard in the house. . . .

Seventh Servant. We ought to make the children keep still, who are playing before the ventilator.

Eighth Servant. They will be still of themselves by and by.

Ninth Servant. The time has not yet come.

[*Enter an old Servant.*]

The Old Servant. No one can go in the room any longer. I have listened more than an hour. . . . You could hear the flies walk on the doors. . . . I heard nothing. . . .

First Servant. Has she been left alone in the room?

The Old Servant. No, no; I think the room is full of people.

First Servant. They will come, they will come, by and by. . . .

The Old Servant. Lord! Lord! It is not happiness that has come into the house. . . . One may not speak, but if I could say what I know. . . .

Second Servant. It was you who found them before the gate?

The Old Servant. Why, yes! why, yes! It was I who found them. The porter says it was he who saw them first; but it was I who waked them. He was sleeping on his face and would not get up.—And now he comes saying, "It was I who saw them first." Is that just?—See, I burned myself lighting a lamp to go down cellar.—Now what was I going to do down cellar?—I can't remember any more what I was going to do down cellar.—At any rate, I got up very early; it was not yet very light; I said to myself, I will go across the courtyard, and then I will open the gate. Good; I go down the stairs on tip-toe, and I open the gate as if it were an ordinary gate. . . . My God! My God! What do I see? Divine a little what I see! . . .

First Servant. They were before the gate?

The Old Servant. They were both stretched

out before the gate! . . . Exactly like poor folk that are too hungry. . . . They were huddled together like little children who are afraid. . . . The little princess was nearly dead, and the great Golaud had still his sword in his side. . . . There was blood on the sill. . . .

Second Servant. We ought to make the children keep still. . . . They are screaming with all their might before the ventilator. . . .

Third Servant. You can't hear yourself speak. . . .

Fourth Servant. There is nothing to be done: I have tried already; they won't keep still. . . .

First Servant. It seems he is nearly cured?

The Old Servant. Who?

First Servant. The great Golaud.

Third Servant. Yes, yes; they have taken him to his wife's room. I met them just now, in the corridor. They were holding him up as if he were drunk. He cannot yet walk alone.

The Old Servant. He could not kill himself; he is too big. But she is hardly wounded, and it is she who is going to die. . . . Can you understand that?

First Servant. You have seen the wound?

The Old Servant. As I see you, my daughter.—I saw everything, you understand. . . . I saw it before all the others. . . . A tiny little wound under her little left breast,—a little wound that wouldn't kill a pigeon. Is it natural?

First Servant. Yes, yes; there is something underneath. . . .

Second Servant. Yes; but she was delivered of her babe three days ago. . . .

The Old Servant. Exactly! . . . She was delivered on her death-bed; is that a little sign?—And what a child! Have you seen it? A wee little girl a beggar would not bring into the world. . . . A little wax figure that came much too soon; . . . a little wax figure that must live in kumbs' wool. . . . Yes, yes; it is not happiness that has come into the house. . . .

First Servant. Yes, yes; it is the hand of God that has been stirring. . . .

Second Servant. Yes, yes; all that did not happen without reason. . . .

Third Servant. It is as good Lord Pélleas . . . where is he?—No one knows. . . .

The Old Servant. Yes, yes; everybody knows. . . . But nobody dare speak of it. . . .

One does not speak of this; . . . one does not speak of that; . . . one speaks no more of anything; . . . one no longer speaks truth. . . . But I know he was found at the bottom of Blind Man's Spring; . . . but no one, no one could see him. . . . Well, well, we shall only know all that at the last day. . . .

First Servant. I dare not sleep here any longer. . . .

The Old Servant. Yes, yes; once ill-fortune is in the house, one keeps silence in vain. . . .

Third Servant. Yes; it finds you all the same. . . .

The Old Servant. Yes, yes; but we do not go where we would. . . .

Fourth Servant. Yes, yes; we do not do what we would. . . .

First Servant. They are afraid of us now.

Second Servant. They all keep silence. . . .

Third Servant. They cast down their eyes in the corridors.

Fourth Servant. They do not speak any more except in a low voice.

Fifth Servant. You would think they had all done it together.

Sixth Servant. One doesn't know what they have done. . . .

Seventh Servant. What is to be done when the masters are afraid? . . . [A silence.]

First Servant. I no longer hear the children screaming.

Second Servant. They are sitting down before the ventilator.

Third Servant. They are huddled against each other.

The Old Servant. I no longer hear anything in the house. . . .

First Servant. You no longer even hear the children breathe. . . .

The Old Servant. Come, come; it is time to go up. . . . [Exeunt, in silence.]

SCENE TWO—An apartment in the castle. ARKËL, GOLAUD, and the PHYSICIAN discovered in one corner of the room. MÉLISANDE is stretched upon her bed.

The Physician. It cannot be of that little wound she is dying; a bird would not have died of it. . . . It is not you, then, who have killed her, good my lord; do not be so disconsolate. . . . She could not have lived. . . . She was born without reason . . . to die; and she dies without reason. . . . And then, it is not sure we shall not save her. . . .

Arkël. No, no; it seems to me we keep too

silent, in spite of ourselves, in her room. . . . It is not a good sign. . . . Look how she sleeps . . . slowly, slowly; . . . it is as if her soul was cold forever. . . .

Golaud. I have killed her without cause! I have killed her without cause! . . . Is it not enough to make the stones weep? . . . They had kissed like little children. . . . They had simply kissed. . . . They were brother and sister. . . . And I, and I at once! . . . I did it in spite of myself, look you. . . . I did it in spite of myself. . . .

The Physician. Stop; I think she is waking. . . .

Mélisande. Open the window; . . . open the window. . . .

Arkël. Shall I open this one, *Mélisande*?

Mélisande. No, no; the great window . . . the great window. . . . It is to see . . .

Arkël. Is not the sea air too cold to-night?

The Physician. Do it; do it. . . .

Mélisande. Thanks. . . . Is it sunset?

Arkël. Yes; it is sunset on the sea; it is late.—How are you, *Mélisande*?

Mélisande. Well, well.—Why do you ask that? I have never been better.—And yet it seems to me I know something. . . .

Arkël. What sayest thou?—I do not understand thee. . . .

Mélisande. Neither do I understand all I say, you see. . . . I do not know what I am saying. . . . I do not know what I know. . . . I no longer say what I would. . . .

Arkël. Why, yes! why, yes! . . . I am quite happy to hear thee speak so; thou hast raved a little these last days, and one no longer understood thee. . . . But now all that is far away. . . .

Mélisande. I do not know. . . .—Are you all alone in the room, grandfather?

Arkël. No; there is the physician, besides, who cured thee. . . .

Mélisande. Ah! . . .

Arkël. And then there is still some one else. . . .

Mélisande. Who is it?

Arkël. It is . . . thou must not be frightened. . . . He does not wish thee the least harm, be sure. . . . If thou'rt afraid, he will go away. . . . He is very unhappy. . . .

Mélisande. Who is it?

Arkël. It is thy . . . thy husband. . . . It is *Golaud*. . . .

Mélisande. *Golaud* is here? Why does he not come by me?

Golaud [*dragging himself toward the bed*].
Mélisande . . . *Mélisande*. . . .

Mélisande. Is it you, *Golaud*? I should hardly recognize you any more. . . . It is the evening sunlight in my eyes. . . . Why look you on the walls? You have grown thin and old. . . . Is it a long while since we saw each other?

Golaud. [*To ARKËL and the PHYSICIAN.*] Will you withdraw a moment, if you please, if you please? . . . I will leave the door wide open. . . . One moment only. . . . I would say something to her; else I could not die. . . . Will you?—Go clear to the end of the corridor; you can come back at once, at once. . . . Do not refuse me this. . . . I am a wretch. . . . [*Exit ARKËL and the PHYSICIAN.*]—*Mélisande*, hast thou pity on me, as I have pity on thee? . . . *Mélisande*? . . . Dost thou forgive me, *Mélisande*? . . .

Mélisande. Yes, yes, I do forgive thee. . . . What must I forgive? . . .

Golaud. I have wrought thee so much ill, *Mélisande*. . . . I cannot tell thee the ill I have wrought thee. . . . But I see it, I see it so clearly to-day . . . since the first day. . . . And all I did not know till now leaps in my eyes to-night. . . . And it is all my fault, all that has happened, all that will happen. . . . If I could tell it, thou wouldst see as I do! . . . I see all! I see all! . . . But I loved thee so! . . . I loved thee so! . . . But now there is some one dying. . . . It is I who am dying. . . . And I would know. . . . I would ask thee. . . . Thou'lt bear me no ill-will. . . . I would . . . The truth must be told to a dying man. . . . He must know the truth, or else he could not sleep. . . . Swearst thou to tell me the truth?

Mélisande. Yes.

Golaud. Didst thou love *Pelléas*?

Mélisande. Why, yes; I loved him.—Where is he?

Golaud. Thou dost not understand me?—Thou wilt not understand me?—It seems to me . . . it seems to me . . . Well, then, here: I ask thee if thou lovest him with a forbidden love? . . . Wert thou . . . were you guilty? Say, say, yes, yes, yes! . . .

Mélisande. No, no; we were not guilty.—Why do you ask that?

Golaud. *Mélisande*! . . . tell me the truth, for the love of God!

Mélisande. Why have I not told the truth?

Golaud. Do not lie so any more, at the moment of death!

Mélisande. Who is dying?—Is it I?

Golaud. Thou, thou! And I, I too, after thee! . . . And we must have the truth. . . . We must have the truth at last, dost thou understand? . . . Tell me all! Tell me all! I forgive thee all! . . .

Mélisande. Why am I going to die?—I did not know it. . . .

Golaud. Thou knowest it now! . . . It is time! It is time! . . . Quick! quick! . . . The truth! the truth! . . .

Mélisande. The truth . . . the truth . . .

Golaud. Where art thou?—*Mélisande!*—Where art thou?—It is not natural! *Mélisande.* Where art thou!—Where goest thou? [*Perceiving ARKËL and the PHYSICIAN at the door of the room.*—Yes, yes; you may come in. . . . I know nothing; it is useless. . . . It is too late; she is already too far away from us. . . . I shall never know! . . . I shall die here like a blind man! . . .

Arkël. What have you done? You will kill her. . . .

Golaud. I have already killed her. . . .

Arkël. *Mélisande.* . . .

Mélisande. Is it you, grandfather?

Arkël. Yes, my daughter. . . . What would you have me do?

Mélisande. Is it true that the winter is beginning? . . .

Arkël. Why dost thou ask?

Mélisande. Because it is cold, and there are no more leaves. . . .

Arkël. Thou art cold?—Wilt thou have the windows closed?

Mélisande. No, no, . . . not till the sun be at the bottom of the sea.—It sinks slowly; then it is the winter beginning?

Arkël. Yes.—Thou dost not like the winter?

Mélisande. Oh! no. I am afraid of the cold.—I am so afraid of the great cold. . . .

Arkël. Dost thou feel better?

Mélisande. Yes, yes; I have no longer all those qualms. . . .

Arkël. Wouldst thou see thy child?

Mélisande. What child?

Arkël. Thy child.—Thou art a mother. . . . Thou hast brought a little daughter into the world. . . .

Mélisande. Where is she?

Arkël. Here. . . .

Mélisande. It is strange. I cannot lift my arms to take her. . . .

Arkël. Because you are still very weak. . . . I will hold her myself; look. . . .

Mélisande. She does not laugh. . . . She is little. . . . She is going to weep too. . . . I pity her. . . .

[*The room has been invaded, little by little, by the women servants of the castle, who range themselves in silence along the walls and wait.*]

Golaud [*rising abruptly*]. What is the matter?—What are all these women coming here for? . . .

The Physician. It is the servants. . . .

Arkël. Who was it called them?

The Physician. It was not I. . . .

Golaud. Why do you come here?—No one has asked for you. . . . What come you here to do?—But what is it, then?—Answer me!

[*The servants make no answer.*]

Arkël. Do not speak too loud. . . . She is going to sleep; she has closed her eyes. . . .

Golaud. It is not . . . ?

The Physician. No, no; see, she breathes.

Arkël. Her eyes are full of tears.—It is her soul weeping now. . . . Why does she stretch her arms out so?—What would she?

The Physician. It is toward the child, without doubt. . . . It is the struggle of motherhood against . . .

Golaud. At this moment?—At this moment?—You must say. Say! Say! . . .

The Physician. Perhaps.

Golaud. At once? . . . Oh! oh! I must tell her. . . . —*Mélisande!* . . . *Mélisande!* . . . Leave me alone! leave me alone with her! . . .

Arkël. No, no; do not come near. . . . Trouble her not. . . . Speak no more to her. . . . You know not what the soul is. . . .

Golaud. It is not my fault! . . . It is not my fault!

Arkël. Hush! . . . Hush! . . . We must speak softly now.—She must not be disturbed. . . . The human soul is very silent. . . . The human soul likes to depart alone. . . . It suffers so timorously. . . . But the sadness, *Golaud* . . . the sadness of all we see! . . . Oh! oh! oh! . . .

[*At this moment, all the servants fall suddenly on their knees at the back of the chamber.*]

Arkël [*turning*]. What is the matter!

The Physician [approaching the bed and feeling the body]. They are right. . . .

[A long silence.]

Arkël. I saw nothing.—Are you sure?

The Physician. Yes, yes.

Arkël. I heard nothing. . . . So quick, so quick! . . . All at once! . . . She goes without a word. . . .

Golaud [sobbing]. Oh! oh! oh!

Arkël. Do not stay here, Golaud. . . . She must have silence now. . . . Come, come. . . . It is terrible, but it is not your fault. . . .

'Twas a little being, so quiet, so fearful, and so silent. . . . 'Twas a poor little mysterious being, like everybody. . . . She lies there as if she were the big sister of her child. . . . Come, come. . . . My God! My God! . . . I shall never understand it at all. . . . Let us not stay here.—Come; the child must not stay here in this room. . . . She must live now in her place. . . . It is the poor little one's turn. . . . [They go out in silence.]

THE END

LIGHT-O'-LOVE

(LIEBELEI)

By ARTHUR SCHNITZLER

Translated from the German by BAYARD QUINCY MORGAN

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ARTHUR SCHNITZLER AND HIS PLAYS

ARTHUR SCHNITZLER, the author of *Light-o'-Love*, the greatest dramatist of Austria since Grillparzer, was born in Vienna, and was graduated from the University of Vienna in 1885 as a doctor of medicine. Like Tchekhov, the Russian dramatist, who was also a physician, he practiced his profession with ardor and success, and, as was also the case with Tchekhov, that profession strongly influenced his plays. Like Tchekhov, too, he became famous as writer of fiction as well as a dramatist. Schnitzler was a pure naturalist, recording life dispassionately as he saw it, without bias, but with all the subtle insight into the springs of action and all the tolerant understanding characteristic of a physician who is also a psychologist. He was as far as possible removed from the reformers; for he had not even any explanation of life, any "synthesis," any "philosophy." He was calmly contemplative, but he was not devoid of pity and sympathy; he was even, at times, not without tenderness. He maintained in turn two very different points of view as he surveyed the world of human beings. From one he saw amusing creatures disporting themselves, a careless, graceful, sophisticated set, yet even in their careless play suggesting how easily their comedy may turn to tragedy. From the other, he saw rather care-worn men and women seeking a way out of life's perplexities, suffering from its disillusionments. The merely careless ones he pictured in such plays as *Anatol*; the tired and disillusioned, in *The Lonely Way*. Such plays, whether humorous or tragic, are a characteristic product of mid-Europe; they spring from the soil of an old and sophisticated civilization; they disregard, perhaps they are not even aware of, the "moral standards" in sex that dictate the conventions of younger and more self-conscious peoples; and at times they show a certain weariness and disillusionment antipathetic to more naïve and optimistic civilizations.

Schnitzler handled his technique with the ease of a virtuoso. It is more successful, perhaps, in the one-act form (of which he was the acknowledged master), as is shown in *Literature* and *Living Hours*. Technically, his most distinctive achievement is his brilliant dialogue, graceful, witty, cynical, the best of its kind in modern continental drama, a dialogue that has exercised a profound influence upon, for instance, Benavente. Yet, in spite of the distinguished ease with which he moved in the world of the careless, cynical, sophisticated persons who use such speech, he seemed still more at home in "the twilight of the soul," a world in which regret for past deeds, hopeless desires, inhibitions that strangle and destroy, create an atmosphere of half-lights, some of which seem to be cast from a realm of the sub-conscious just beyond the threshold. Here Schnitzler was of the "new psychology"; and the very half-tones, reticences, and suggestions of his delicate method often say more than the most voluble speech.

Light-o'-Love represents a mean between the tone and method of *Anatol* and those of *The Lonely Way*. It has much of the grace and charm of the one and something of the regret and disillusionment of the other. It shows how close the comedy of the careless is to the sheer tragedy of the disillusioned. In spite of the profound social changes in Austria within the past two decades, it retains its power, since this is founded upon its subtle and sympathetic delineation of permanent and universal human traits.

Light-o'-Love was produced first in Vienna at the Hofburg theater in October, 1895. Its first production in English was in New York in February, 1905, under the title of *Flirtation*, by the Progressive Stage Society. Under the title of *The Reckoning* it was again produced in New York in 1907, and still again, this time in German, in 1912. In the meantime it had been produced in English in London in May, 1909. In 1929, it was revived in New York under the title *Playing with Love*. The author died in 1931.

CHARACTERS

HANS VYRING, *violinist at the city theatre*

CHRISTINE, *his daughter*

TONI SCHLAGER, *milliner*

CATHERINE BINDER, *wife of a stocking-maker*

LENA, *her nine-year-old daughter*

FRITZ LOHEIMER, } *young men*

THEODORE KAISER, }

A GENTLEMAN

The action takes place in Vienna at the present day

LIGHT-O'-LOVE

ACT ONE

Fritz's room. Cozy but elegantly furnished.

Theodore. [*Enters in advance. He carries a stick, has an overcoat flung over his arm; takes off his hat upon entering.*]

Fritz. [*Outside.*] So nobody has been here?

Voice. No, sir.

Fritz. [*Entering.*] I suppose we might let the carriage go?

Theodore. Of course. I thought you had.

Fritz. [*Goes to the door.*] Send the carriage away. And . . . you can go, too. I don't need you any more. [*Returning.*] Why don't you lay down your things?

Theodore. [*At the desk.*] Here are a couple of letters. [*Throws coat and hat on a chair, keeps his stick.*]

Fritz. [*Hastens to the desk.*] Oh! . . .

Theodore. Now, now! . . . I believe you're frightened!

Fritz. From dad. . . . [*Opens a second letter.*] From Lensky.

Theodore. Don't let me disturb you.

Fritz. [*Skims the letters.*]

Theodore. What does your father say?

Fritz. Nothing special. . . . He wants me to spend a week on the estate at Whiteside.

Theodore. Excellent plan. I'd like to send you there for six months.

Fritz. [*Turns to face him.*]

Theodore. I certainly would!—riding, driving, fresh air, dairy-maids—

Fritz. Idiot, there aren't any dairy-farms out there.

Theodore. Well, you know what I mean, don't you?

Fritz. Will you come along?

Theodore. You know I can't.

Fritz. Why not?

Theodore. My dear fellow, I have my doctor's exam. coming! If I went along, it would be only for the sake of keeping you there.

Fritz. Oh, come, you needn't worry about me.

Theodore. You see, all you need is fresh air; I'm convinced of that—I saw that today. Out yonder in the open where we found the genuine green springtime, you were a very pleasant fellow again.

Fritz. Thanks.

Theodore. And now—now of course you are collapsing. We're too close to the dangerous atmospheric zone again.

Fritz. [*Makes a gesture of irritation.*]

Theodore. Why, you've no idea how jolly you were out there. You were actually reasonable for once; it was like the good old days. And then a couple of days ago, when we were out with those two jolly little girls, you were very nice; but now—that's all over again, and you find it absolutely necessary to think—[*With ironical pathos.*—of that woman.

Fritz. [*Rises, vexed.*]

Theodore. You don't know me, my dear fellow. I don't intend to stand that any longer.

Fritz. My goodness, but you're ambitious!

Theodore. Oh, I don't demand of you that you forget—[*as before*—that woman. . . . I only hope—[*warmly*—my dear Fritz, that this miserable affair, that keeps me trembling for you all the time, means no more to you than any trivial love affair. . . . Look here, Fritz, some day, when you stop worshipping "that woman," you'll be surprised how congenial she is to you. Then you'll find out that there's nothing demoniac in her at all, but that she is a very sweet little woman—one that you can have plenty of fun with, just as you can with all women that are young and pretty, and that have a little temperament.

Fritz. Why do you say "tremble for me"?

Theodore. You know why. . . . I must confess that I am in constant terror that you will run off with her some fine day.

Fritz. That was what you meant?

Theodore. [*After a short pause.*] That isn't the only danger.

Fritz. Right you are, Theodore—there are others, too.

Theodore. But then we never do anything silly.

Fritz. [To himself.] There are others, too. . . .

Theodore. What's the matter? . . . You're thinking of something in particular.

Fritz. Oh, no, I'm not . . . [Glances at the window.] She was deceived once before.

Theodore. What? . . . What's that? . . . I don't understand you.

Fritz. Oh, nothing.

Theodore. What? Do talk sense.

Fritz. She's been afraid lately . . . at times.

Theodore. Why?—There must be a reason for it.

Fritz. Not at all. Nervousness—[ironically]—an uneasy conscience, if you will.

Theodore. You say she was deceived once—

Fritz. Well, yes—and again to-day, I suppose.

Theodore. To-day—well, what does all this mean?

Fritz. [After a slight pause.] She thinks . . . we are watched.

Theodore. What?

Fritz. She sees apparitions; really, she has actual hallucinations. [At the window.] She sees some person standing on the street corner, . . . through the crack in the curtain, and thinks—[Breaks off.] Is it possible, anyway, to recognize a face at this distance?

Theodore. Scarcely.

Fritz. Why, that's what I say. But then that's terrible. She's afraid to go out; she has all sorts of queer feelings; she gets hysterical; she wants to die with me—

Theodore. Of course.

Fritz. [Short pause.] To-day I had to go down and take a look. Went down as cheerfully as if I were leaving the house alone; of course there wasn't a familiar face to be seen anywhere. . . .

Theodore. [Is silent.]

Fritz. Well, that ought to set fears at rest, oughtn't it? A man can't suddenly be swallowed up by the earth, hey? . . . Answer, can't you?

Theodore. What sort of an answer do you want? Of course a man can't be swallowed up. But a man can hide inside the gates.

Fritz. I looked behind them all.

Theodore. You must have looked very innocent at that.

Fritz. There was nobody there. I tell you it's hallucinations.

Theodore. Certainly. But it ought to teach you to be more careful.

Fritz. And I couldn't have helped knowing it, if he suspected it. Why, I ate supper with them yesterday after the play—with him and her—and it was so pleasant! . . . ridiculous, I tell you!

Theodore. I beg of you Fritz, be sensible; do me that favor. Give up this whole cursed affair, for my sake, if nothing else. I have nerves, too . . . I know you're not the kind of man who can escape from such an affair unaided, and so I made it so easy for you—gave you a chance to save yourself by starting another . . .

Fritz. You did?

Theodore. Well, didn't I take you along with me when I had an appointment with little Miss Toni a while back? And didn't I ask her to bring along her prettiest friend? And can you deny that you like her?

Fritz. Certainly, she is sweet! . . . So sweet! And you have no idea how I longed for such an affection as that, so sweet and quiet, that would hover about me and soothe me, and help me to recover from these everlasting irritations and torments.

Theodore. That's exactly it. Recover! That's the deeper purpose of it. They help us to recover. That's why I'm against these so-called interesting women. It's not the business of women to be interesting, but to be agreeable. You must seek happiness where I have sought and found it—where there are no grand scenes, no dangers, no tragic entanglements—where the beginning has no special difficulties, and the ending no torments—where you take your first kiss with a smile, and part with very gentle emotion.

Fritz. Yes, that's it.

Theodore. Those women are so happy in their healthy every-day womanhood—what compels us to make demons or angels out of them at all cost?

Fritz. She is really a treasure. So affectionate, so dear. Often it seems to me she is too dear for me.

Theodore. You're incorrigible, apparently. If you intend to take that affair seriously again. . . .

Fritz. No, no, not a thought of it. We are agreed, I need to recover.

Theodore. If you did, I'd give you up for good. I've had enough of your love-tragedies. You bore me with them. And if you feel like coming at me with your famous "conscience," I'll give you my simple rule for treating such cases: Better it were I than some one else. For that "some one else" is as sure as fate itself.

[*There is a ring.*]

Fritz. What's that now? . . .

Theodore. Go and see. There you are, all pale again! Set your fears at rest. It's the two sweet little girls.

Fritz. [*Agreeably surprised.*] What?

Theodore. I took the liberty of inviting them here to-day.

Fritz. [*Going out.*] Oh, you—why didn't you tell me? Now I've sent away my man.

Theodore. So much the cozier.

Fritz. [*Outside.*] Greetings, Toni.

Toni. [*Enters, carrying a package.*]

Fritz. [*Re-enters behind her.*] And where's Christine?

Toni. She'll be here soon. Greetings, Dore.

Theodore. [*Kisses her hand.*]

Toni. You'll have to excuse us, Mr. Fritz; but Theodore invited us. . . .

Fritz. Why, it was a splendid idea. Only he forgot something, Theodore did.

Theodore. Theodore forgot nothing! [*Takes the package from Toni.*] Did you bring everything I wrote down for you?

Toni. Of course. [*To Fritz.*] Where can I put it?

Fritz. Just give it to me, Toni; we'll put it on the sideboard for the present.

Toni. I bought something else, Dore, besides what you told me.

Fritz. Give me your hat, Toni, that's right. [*Lays it on the piano, also her boa.*]

Theodore. [*Dubiously.*] What?

Toni. A coffee cream-cake.

Theodore. Oh, what a sweet tooth!

Fritz. Well, but tell me, why didn't Christine come with you?

Toni. She's going to take her father to the theatre first. Then she'll come along on the street car.

Theodore. What an affectionate daughter! . . .

Toni. I should say so, and especially since he went into mourning.

Theodore. Why, who died there, anyway?

Toni. The old gentleman's sister.

Theodore. Ah, a widow?

Toni. No, it was an old maiden lady, who has lived with them always. Well, and so he feels so lonesome, somehow.

Theodore. He's a little man with short gray hair—her father—isn't he?

Toni. [*Shakes her head.*] No, he has long hair.

Fritz. How do you come to know him?

Theodore. Recently I was in the theatre with Lensky, and I took a look at the men playing the bass-voils.

Toni. Why, he doesn't play the bass-viol—he plays the violin.

Theodore. Oh, is that so? I thought he played the bass-viol. [*Toni laughs.*] Nothing funny about that; how should I know, child?

Toni. What a beautiful place you have, Mr. Fritz—just wonderful! What view is that?

Fritz. This window opens on Straw Lane, and in the next room —

Theodore. [*Quickly.*] Do tell me, why are you so formal, you two?

Toni. At supper we'll get better acquainted.

Theodore. A lady of principle, I see. Well, that's some comfort, just the same. How's your mother, anyhow?

Toni. [*Turns to him, her face suddenly showing concern.*] Only think, she's got —

Theodore. Toothache, I know, I know. Your mother always has the toothache. She ought to go to a dentist one of these times.

Toni. But the doctor says it's only rheumatic pains.

Theodore. [*Laughing.*] Well, if it's rheumatic . . .

Toni. [*An album in her hand.*] Nothing but pretty things. [*Turning the pages.*] Who is that? . . . Why, that's you, Mr. Fritz, . . . in uniform? You're in the army?

Fritz. Yes.

Toni. Dragon!—Are you in the yellows or the blacks?

Fritz. [*Smiling.*] In the yellows.

Toni. [*As in a reverie.*] The yellows.

Theodore. There she goes a-dreaming. Wake up, Toni!

Toni. But now you're lieutenant in the reserves?

Fritz. Surely.

Toni. You must look very nice in the fur cap.

Theodore. How much she knows about it!—Look here, Toni, I'm in the army, too.

Toni. Are you in the dragoons, too?

Theodore. Yes.

Toni. Well, why can't you tell a body that?

Theodore. I want to be loved for myself.

Toni. Come, Dore, you must put on your uniform some time when we're going out together.

Theodore. In August there will be manoeuvres, anyway.

Toni. Heavens! by August—

Theodore. Yes, that's so—eternal love doesn't last that long.

Toni. Who thinks about August in May? Isn't that so, Mr. Fritz?—Say, Mr. Fritz, why did you run away from us yesterday?

Fritz. What do you mean?

Toni. Why—after the play.

Fritz. Didn't Theodore make my excuses to you?

Theodore. To be sure, I excused you.

Toni. What good do your excuses do me, or rather Christine? When a man makes a promise, he ought to keep it.

Fritz. I really would rather have gone with you.

Toni. Really?

Fritz. But I couldn't. You saw yourselves I was in a box with friends, and afterward I couldn't get away from them.

Toni. Yes, you couldn't get away from the pretty ladies. Do you think we didn't see you from the gallery?

Fritz. Well, I saw you, too.

Toni. You were sitting backwards in the box.

Fritz. Not all the time.

Toni. But most of it. Behind a lady with a black velvet dress you sat and kept—[Imitating.]—looking forward like this.

Fritz. You must have watched me closely.

Toni. Why, it's nothing to me. But if I were Christine . . . Why did Theodore have time after the play? Why doesn't he have to take supper with friends?

Theodore. [Proudly.] Why don't I have to take supper with friends?

[*There is a ring. Fritz hastens out.*]

Theodore. Toni, you can do me a favor.

Toni. [Assumes questioning expression.]

Theodore. Forget your military recollections—at least, for a time.

Toni. Why, I haven't any.

Theodore. Come, now, you didn't learn all that just by accident, that's plain enough.

Christine. [*Enters with flowers in her hand. Fritz behind her. With a trace of embarrassment.*] Good-evening. [*General salutation. To Fritz.*] Are you glad we came—You're not angry?

Fritz. But—my dear child! Sometimes, you know Theodore is cleverer than I am.

Theodore. Well, is your father fiddling by now?

Christine. Surely; I took him to the theatre.

Fritz. Toni told us.

Christine. [*To Toni.*] And Catherine stopped me, too.

Toni. Oh, pshaw! the false cat!

Christine. Oh, no, she isn't false at all; she is very good to me.

Toni. You trust every one, anyway.

Christine. Why should she be false to me?

Fritz. Who is Catherine?

Toni. The wife of a stocking-maker; and she's always vexed because some girls are younger than she is.

Christine. Why, she's quite young herself.

Fritz. Bother Catherine!—What have you got there?

Christine. I brought along a few flowers for you.

Fritz. [*Takes them from her and kisses her hand.*] You're a little angel. Here, we'll put them in the vase.

Theodore. No, no! You've no talent as decorator. The flowers will be scattered at random on the table. . . . That is, later on, when the table is set. We really ought to fix it so that they would fall from the ceiling. But that can't be done.

Fritz. [*Laughing.*] Scarcely.

Theodore. Meanwhile we'll put them in here, after all. [*Puts them into the vase.*]

Toni. Children, it's getting dark!

Fritz. [*Helps Christine to take off her coat, and she takes off her hat. He puts*

hat and coat on a chair in the background.] We'll light the lamp right away.

Theodore. Lamp! I should say not! Candles we must have. Their light is so much prettier. Come, Toni, you can help me. [He and Toni light the candles, in the branched candelabra before the pier-glass, one on the desk, two candles on the sideboard. Meanwhile FRITZ and CHRISTINE converse.]

Fritz. How are you, sweetheart?

Christine. I'm all right now.

Fritz. Well, but not at other times?

Christine. I have longed so for you.

Fritz. Why, we saw each other only yesterday.

Christine. Saw each other . . . from away off. . . . [Shyly.] Fritz, it wasn't very nice of you to . . .

Fritz. Yes, I know; Toni told me. But you're always a child. I couldn't get away. You've got to understand such things.

Christine. Yes. . . . Fritz, . . . who were the people in the box?

Fritz. Friends of mine—it doesn't matter what their names are.

Christine. Well, who was the lady in the black velvet dress?

Fritz. Child, I have no memory for dresses.

Christine. [Coaxingly.] Come, come!

Fritz. That is to say, . . . I do have a sort of a memory for them—in certain cases. For example, I remember very well that dark-blue waist you had on the first time we saw each other. And the black and white one you wore to the theatre yesterday.

Christine. Why, I'm wearing it to-day!

Fritz. Sure enough; . . . from the distance, you know, it looks different—I mean it! Oh, and that medallion—I know that, too.

Christine. [Smiling.] When did I wear that?

Fritz. Oh,—that time we went walking in the public gardens, where all the children were playing—isn't that right?

Christine. Yes . . . So you do think of me sometimes?

Fritz. Rather frequently, my child.

Christine. Not so often as I think of you. I am always thinking of you . . . all day long; . . . and I can only be happy when I see you.

Fritz. Then don't we see each other often enough?

Christine. Often . . .

Fritz. Certainly. In the summer we shan't see each other so much. Just think! Suppose, for example, I went away for a couple of weeks—what would you say?

Christine. [Anxiously.] What? You are going away?

Fritz. No. . . . And still it might be possible that I would like the notion of being all alone for a week.

Christine. Oh, why?

Fritz. I'm simply talking about possibilities. I know myself, I get such notions. And you, too, might some time take the whim of not wanting to see me for a few days. . . . I'll always understand that.

Christine. No, I'll never have that whim, Fritz.

Fritz. You can't tell about that.

Christine. But I can. . . . I love you.

Fritz. I love you, too, very much.

Christine. But you are everything to me, Fritz; for you I could—[Breaks off.] No, I can't imagine an hour ever coming when I wouldn't want to see you. As long as I live, Fritz—

Fritz. [Interrupts.] Child, I beseech you, . . . don't say anything like that. . . . I don't like big words. We won't talk about eternity.

Christine. [Smiling sadly.] Have no fear, Fritz. . . . I know this can't be for always.

Fritz. You misunderstand me, child. Of course it's possible—[Laughing.]—that we simply won't be able to live without each other, but we can't tell for sure, can we? We're only human.

Theodore. [Pointing to the lighted candles.] Kindly turn your eyes upon that. . . . Isn't that different from a stupid lamp?

Fritz. You're really a born decorator.

Theodore. Children, what do you say—shall we think about eating?

Toni. Yes! . . . Come, Christine.

Fritz. Wait; I'll show you where to find everything.

Toni. First of all, we need a table-cloth.

Theodore. [With German accent, as on the vaudeville stage.] "A table-clot?"

Fritz. What?

Theodore. Don't you remember that fellow in the Orpheum? "Dot is a table-clot."

"Dot is a shtool." "Dot is a liddle pianino."

Toni. Say, Dore, when are you going to the Orpheum with me? You promised me a little while ago. Then Christine will come along, and Mr. Fritz, too. [*She is just taking from Fritz the table-cloth which he has taken out of the sideboard.*] Then we'll be your friends in the box.

Fritz. Yes, yes.

Toni. Then the lady with the black velvet dress can go home alone.

Fritz. Why do you keep thinking about that lady in black? It's too stupid.

Toni. Oh, we don't think about her. . . . There. . . . And the silver? [*Fritz shows her the things in the open sideboard.*] Yes. . . . And the plates? . . . Yes, thanks. . . . There, now we can do it alone all right. Go, go away now, you're only getting in our way.

Theodore. [*Has meanwhile stretched out on the couch; Fritz advances toward him.*] You'll excuse me.

Toni. Did you see the picture of Fritz in his uniform?

Christine. No.

Toni. You must have a look at it. Swell! [*They talk on.*]

Theodore. Such evenings are my delight, Fritz.

Fritz. Well, they are nice.

Theodore. Then I feel so cozy. . . . Don't you?

Fritz. Oh, I wish I could always feel so contented.

Toni. Tell me, Mr. Fritz, is there coffee in the machine?

Fritz. Yes. You can start the lamp under it right away—it takes a good hour on that machine, before the coffee is done.

Theodore. I'd give a dozen demoniac women for a sweet girl like that.

Fritz. There's no comparison.

Theodore. You see, we hate the women that we love—and only love the women that are indifferent to us.

Fritz. [*Laughs.*]

Toni. What's the joke? We'd like to hear it, too.

Theodore. Nothing for you, children. We're philosophizing—If this were to be our last meeting with these girls, we'd be just as jolly, wouldn't we?

Fritz. The last time? . . . Well, there's

certainly something melancholy about that. Parting always gives pain, even if you've been looking forward to it eagerly for a long time.

Christine. Say, Fritz, where's the small silver?

Fritz. [*Goes rear to the sideboard.*] Here it is, sweetheart.

Toni. [*Comes forward, runs her hand through THEODORE'S hair; he still reclining on the couch.*]

Theodore. You pussy-cat!

Fritz. [*Opens the package TONI brought.*] Grand!

Christine. [*To Fritz.*] You have everything in such good order.

Fritz. Yes. [*Arranges the things. TONI brought—sardines, cold meat, butter, cheese.*]

Christine. Fritz . . . won't you tell me?

Fritz. Tell you what?

Christine. [*Very timidly.*] Who the lady was.

Fritz. No; don't make me cross. [*More gently.*] You see, that's one thing we agreed upon expressly: No questions asked. That's the nice thing about it. When I am with you the world disappears, like that— [*Snaps his fingers.*] I don't ask you any questions, either.

Christine. You can ask me anything you like.

Fritz. But I don't. I don't want to know anything.

Toni. [*Returns to table.*] Goodness, what a mess you're making! [*Takes the edibles, puts them on the plates.*] There. . . .

Theodore. Say, Fritz, have you anything to drink here?

Fritz. Oh, yes, I think I can find something. [*Exit into front room.*]

Theodore. [*Raises himself and inspects the table.*] Good.

Toni. There, I think we've got everything now.

Fritz. [*Returns with some bottles.*] Here's something to drink, too.

Theodore. Where are the roses that fall from the ceiling?

Toni. That's right, we forgot the roses. [*She takes the roses out of the vase, climbs on a chair, and lets the roses fall on the table.*] There!

Christine. My, what a wild girl you are to-night!

Theodore. Here, not on the plates.
Fritz. Where do you want to sit, Christine?

Theodore. Where is the cork-screw?

Fritz. [*Gets one from the sideboard.*]
 Here is one.

Toni. [*Tries to open a bottle.*]

Fritz. No, let me do that.

Theodore. No, let me do it. . . . [*Takes bottle and cork-screw from him.*] Meanwhile you might—[*Moves his fingers as at the piano.*]

Toni. Yes, yes, that's grand! . . . [*She runs to the piano, takes the things off it, and opens it.*]

Fritz. [*To Christine.*] Shall I?

Christine. Oh, please do, I've wanted that for so long.

Fritz. [*At the piano.*] You can play a little too?

Christine. [*With a gesture.*] Oh goodness.

Toni. She plays fine, Christine does. . . . she can sing too.

Fritz. Really? You never told me that.

Christine. Did you ever ask me?

Fritz. Where did you learn to sing?

Christine. I really never learned. Father taught me a little—but I haven't got much voice. And you know, since auntie died, the one that always lived with us, it's even quieter at home than it was before.

Fritz. What do you do, anyway, all day long?

Christine. Oh, I have plenty to do!

Fritz. Around the house, I suppose?

Christine. Yes. And then I copy notes quite a lot.

Theodore. Music notes?

Christine. Surely.

Theodore. They must pay you tremendously for that. [*The others laugh.*] Well, I'd pay tremendously for it. Music copying must be a terrible task, I think.

Toni. There's no sense in her working so hard, either. If I had as much voice as you have, I'd have been in the theatre long ago.

Theodore. You wouldn't even need a voice. . . . Of course you do nothing all day, hey?

Toni. Well, I like that! I have two little brothers that are going to school. I have to dress them in the morning. And then I help them with their lessons—

Theodore. That's a lie, every word of it.

Toni. Well, if you won't believe me—

And until last autumn I was in a store from eight in the morning till eight at night.

Theodore. [*Mockingly.*] Where was that?

Toni. In a millinery store. Mother wants me to go back there.

Theodore. [*As above.*] Why did you leave it?

Fritz. [*To Christine.*] Then you must sing something for us.

Theodore. Come on, children, let's eat first, and then you'll play, won't you?

Fritz. [*Rising, to CHRISTINE.*] Come, sweetheart. [*Leads her to the table.*]

Toni. The coffee! There's the coffee boiling over, and we haven't begun to eat.

Theodore. Nothing matters now.

Toni. But it's boiling over! [*Blows out the flame.*]

[*All sit down at the table.*]

Theodore. What will you have, Toni? But let me tell you this: the cake comes last! . . . First you've got to eat nothing but sour things.

Fritz. [*Pours out the wine.*]

Theodore. Not that way: we do it differently now. Don't you know the latest fashion? [*Stands up, affects magniloquence; to CHRISTINE, bottle in hand.*] Special quality, genuine Johannisberger, eighteen hundred—[*Mumbles the last figures. Fills glass, then goes to TONI, to FRITZ, repeating the same ceremony and words; finally stands at his own place, and repeats as before. Seats himself.*]

Toni. [*Laughing.*] He's always doing something silly.

Theodore. [*Raises his glass; all clink.*] Prosit.

Toni. Your health, Theodore.

Theodore. [*Rising.*] Ladies and Gentlemen . . .

Fritz. Oh, not yet!

Theodore. [*Sits again.*] Well, I can wait.

Toni. Oh, that's what I like,—after-dinner speeches. I have a cousin that always makes his speeches in rhymes.

Theodore. What regiment is he in?

Toni. Come, stop that . . . He talks if off by heart and in rhyme, and it's just splendid, Christine. And he's an elderly gentleman now, too.

Theodore. Oh, it sometimes happens that elderly gentlemen can still talk in rhyme.

Fritz. But you're not drinking at all, Christine! [*Clinks with her.*]

Theodore. [*Clinks with TONI.*] To the old gentleman who talks in rhymes.

Toni. [*Merrily.*] To the young gentlemen, even if they don't talk at all . . . for example, to Mr. Fritz. . . . Say, Mr. Fritz, now we'll drink to our better acquaintance, if you wish—and Christine must do the same with Theodore.

Theodore. But not with this wine, that's not the right kind for it. [*Rises, takes another bottle, same ceremony as before.*] Xeres de la Frontera mille huit cent cinquante—

Toni. [*Sips.*] Ah—

Theodore. Can't you wait till we all drink together? Now then, children . . . Before we solemnly drink to our better acquaintance, let us drink to the happy chance that, that . . . and so forth . . .

Toni. Yes, that's enough. [*They drink, FRITZ taking TONI's arm, THEODORE CHRISTINE'S.*]

Fritz. [*Kisses TONI.*]

Theodore. [*Starts to kiss CHRISTINE.*]

Christine. Is that necessary?

Theodore. Absolutely, else the whole ceremony is null. . . . [*Kisses her.*] There, and now to your seats! . . .

Toni. But it's getting terribly hot in the room.

Fritz. That's because of all the candles Theodore lit.

Toni. And the wine, too. [*She leans back in her chair.*]

Theodore. Come here, the best of all is coming now. [*He cuts off a slice of the cake and puts it in her mouth.*] There, sweet tooth,—that good?

Toni. Awfully! . . . [*He gives her another.*]

Theodore. Come, Fritz, now's the time. Now you might play something.

Fritz. Do you want me to, Christine?

Christine. Please do!

Toni. Play something swell.

Theodore. [*Fills the glasses.*]

Toni. No more. [*Drinks.*]

Christine. [*Sipping.*] The wine is so heavy.

Theodore. [*Pointing to the glass.*] Fritz.

Fritz. [*Empties the glass, goes to piano.*]

Christine. [*Goes and sits by him.*]

Toni. Mr. Fritz, play the "Double Eagle."

Fritz. The "Double Eagle"—how does it go?

Toni. Dore, can't you play it?

Theodore. I can't play at all.

Fritz. I know the thing; but I can't think of it.

Toni. I'll sing it for you. . . . La . . . la . . . lalalala. . . .

Fritz. Aha, now I know. [*Does not play quite correctly.*]

Toni. [*Goes to the piano.*] No, this way. [*Plays the melody with one finger.*]

Fritz. Yes, yes. . . . [*He plays, TONI sings.*]

Theodore. Recollections again, hey?

Fritz. [*Plays wrong again and stops.*] Can't do it. I've got no ear. [*He starts to improvise.*]

Toni. [*After the first measure.*] That's no good.

Fritz. [*Laughs.*] Don't say that, I made it up.

Toni. But it's no good for dancing.

Fritz. Just try it once. . . .

Theodore. [*To TONI.*] Come, let's try. [*They dance.*]

Christine. [*Sits by the piano and looks at the keys.*]

[*There is a ring.*]

Fritz. [*Suddenly stops playing; THEODORE and TONI dance on.*]

Theodore and Toni. [*Together.*] What's all this? Come!

Fritz. The bell just rang. . . . [*To THEODORE.*] Did you invite anybody else?

Theodore. I should say not—you don't need to answer the bell.

Christine. [*To FRITZ.*] What's the matter with you?

Fritz. Nothing. . . .

[*There is 'another ring.'*]

Fritz. [*Stands up, rooted to the spot.*]

Theodore. You are simply not at home.

Fritz. You can hear the piano out in the corridor. . . . And you can see from the street that the room is lit.

Theodore. What folly is this? You're simply not at home.

Fritz. But it makes me nervous.

Theodore. Well, what do you suppose it's going to be? A letter—or a telegram—You're not going to have a visitor at [*Looks at his watch.*] nine o'clock.

[*There is another ring.*]

Fritz. Rubbish, I must go and see—
[*Exit.*]

Toni. But you're not a bit swell—
[*Strikes a few keys on the piano.*]

Theodore. Here, stop that now!—[*To CHRISTINE.*] What ails you? Does the bell make you nervous too?

Fritz. [*Returns, in forced calm.*]

Theodore and Christine. [*Together.*] Well, who was it?—Who was it?

Fritz. [*With a forced smile.*] You must be good enough to excuse me for a moment. Go in there meanwhile.

Theodore. What is it?

Christine. Who is it?

Fritz. Nothing, child, I simply have to say a few words to a gentleman. . . .

[*Fritz has opened the door of the adjoining room, conducts the girls into it. THEODORE, going in last, looks questioningly at Fritz.*]

Fritz. [*In a low voice, with an expression of horror.*] He!

Theodore. Ah!

Fritz. In with you!

Theodore. I beg of you, don't do anything stupid, it may be a trap. . . .

Fritz. Go . . . go . . . [*THEODORE exit.* *Fritz goes rapidly through the room to the corridor, so that the stage is empty for a few seconds. Then he enters again, allowing an elegantly dressed gentleman of about thirty-five years to precede him. THE GENTLEMAN wears a yellow mantle, holds his hat in his gloved hand. While entering.*] Pardon me for making you wait. . . . I beg you. . . .

The Gentleman. [*In a very easy tone.*] Oh, that is nothing. I regret extremely to have disturbed you.

Fritz. By no means. Will you not. . . . [*Indicates a chair.*]

The Gentleman. Why, I see that I have disturbed you? A little entertainment, I presume?

Fritz. A few friends.

The Gentleman. [*Seating himself, amicable.*] A masquerade, no doubt?

Fritz. [*Embarrassed.*] Why do you say that?

The Gentleman. Well, your friends have ladies' hats and cloaks.

Fritz. Well yes. . . . [*Smiling.*] There may be lady friends among them. . . . [*Silence.*]

The Gentleman. Life is at times very merry . . . yes . . . [*Looks rigidly at Fritz.*]

Fritz. [*Endures the glance a while, then looks away.*] I presume I may permit myself to inquire what gives me the pleasure of your visit?

The Gentleman. Certainly. . . . [*Calmly.*] You see, my wife forgot to take her veil away from here.

Fritz. Your wife . . . here? Her . . . [*Smiling.*] The jest is a trifle strange. . . .

The Gentleman. [*Suddenly rising, very loudly, almost wildly, supporting himself by resting one hand on the chair arm.*] She did forget it.

Fritz. [*Rises also, and the two men stand facing each other.*]

The Gentleman. [*Raises his clenched fist, as if to launch it at Fritz; in fury and loathing.*] Oh! . . .

Fritz. [*Makes a parrying motion, takes a short step backward.*]

The Gentleman. [*After a long pause.*] Here are your letters. [*He throws on the desk a packet of letters which he has taken from his overcoat pocket.*] I wish those which you have received.

Fritz. [*Parrying motion.*]

The Gentleman. [*Vehemently, significantly.*] I do not wish to have them found—later—in your rooms.

Fritz. [*Very loudly.*] They will not be found.

The Gentleman. [*Looks at him. Pause.*]

Fritz. What else do you wish of me?

The Gentleman. [*Scornfully.*] What else?

Fritz. I am at your disposal. . . .

The Gentleman. [*Bows coolly.*] Very well. [*He casts a glance around the room; as he again sees the table and the girls' hats, a sudden flash crosses his face, as if he would burst into a new fit of rage.*]

Fritz. [*Notices this.*] I am wholly at your disposal.—I shall be at home to-morrow till noon.

The Gentleman. [*Bows and turns to go.*]

Fritz. [*Accompanies him to the door, THE GENTLEMAN motioning him away. When he is gone, Fritz goes to the desk and stands there a moment. Then he hastens to the window, looks through a crack in the blind, and can be seen to follow the motions of the gentleman passing along the street. Leaving the window he looks down for a moment; then goes to the door of the adjoining room, opens it halfway, and calls.*] 'Theodore, one moment.

[*The following scene very rapid.*]

Theodore. [*Excited.*] Well? . . .

Fritz. He knows.

Theodore. He knows nothing. You simply fell into his trap. I'll wager you even confessed. You're a fool, I tell you. . . . You . . .

Fritz. [*Pointing to the letters.*] He brought me back my letters.

Theodore. [*Startled.*] Oh! . . . [*After a pause.*] I always say, a man ought not to write letters.

Fritz. It was he, this noon, down below.

Theodore. Well, what happened?—Tell me about it.

Fritz. You must do me a great service now, Theodore.

Theodore. I'll fix up the whole business for you.

Fritz. That is out of the question now.

Theodore. Then . . .

Fritz. In any case it will be well. . . . [*Breaks off.*]—But we can't let the poor girls wait so long.

Theodore. Let them wait. What were you going to say?

Fritz. It will be well if you go to Lensky to-day.

Theodore. At once, if you wish.

Fritz. You won't find him now . . . but between eleven and twelve he will surely come into the coffee-house . . . perhaps the two of you will then come here. . . .

Theodore. Come, don't make up such a face . . . ninety-nine times out of a hundred it turns out all right. . . .

Fritz. He will see to it that this one doesn't turn out all right.

Theodore. But I beg you, remember that affair of last year, between Doctor Billinger and Herz—that was exactly the same.

Fritz. None of that! You know yourself he ought to have shot me down right here in the room—it would have come to the same thing.

Theodore. [*Acting.*] Well, that is fine, I must say. That's a grand idea. . . . And so Lensky and I count for nothing? You think we'll agree that . . .

Fritz. I beg of you, no more of that! . . . You simply accept what is proposed.

Theodore. Ah,—

Fritz. What's the sense of all this, Theodore? As if you didn't know.

Theodore. Nonsense. And anyway, it's

all a matter of luck. . . . You have just as much chance of . . .

Fritz. [*Without listening to him.*] She foreboded it. We both foreboded it. We knew it. . . .

Theodore. Come, Fritz. . . .

Fritz. [*Goes to the desk, locks up the letters.*] Oh, what is she doing this minute? Did he . . . Theodore, you must find out to-morrow what happened over there.

Theodore. I will try.

Fritz. And see to it that no useless delay . . .

Theodore. It can scarcely be before day after to-morrow in the morning.

Fritz. [*Almost horrified.*] Theodore!

Theodore. And so . . . head up.—You believe a little in inward conviction, don't you—and I have a firm conviction that everything will turn out all right. [*With forced merriment.*] I don't know why myself, but I have the conviction, anyway!

Fritz. [*Smiling.*] What a good fellow you are. But what shall we say to the girls?

Theodore. That doesn't matter. Let's simply send them away.

Fritz. No, no. Let's be as merry as we can. Christine must not suspect anything. I'll sit down at the piano again; and you call them in. [*THEODORE turns to do this, with discontented face.*] And what shall you say to them?

Theodore. That it's none of their business.

Fritz. [*Who has sat down at the piano, turning toward him.*] No, no—

Theodore. That it's about a friend—I'll invent something.

Fritz. [*Plays a few notes.*]

Theodore. Ladies, I beg you to enter. [*Has opened the door.*]

Toni. Well, at last! Has he gone?

Christine. [*Hastening to FRITZ.*] Who was here, Fritz?

Fritz. [*At the piano, playing.*] Curious again.

Christine. I beg you, Fritz, tell me.

Fritz. Sweetheart, I can't tell you; it really concerns people that you don't know at all.

Christine. [*Coaxingly.*] Come, Fritz, tell me the truth.

Theodore. Of course she won't leave you in peace. . . . But mind you tell her nothing! You promised him.

Toni. Come, don't be so tiresome, Christine, let them have their fun. They're simply putting on airs.

Theodore. I must finish that waltz with Miss Toni. [*German accent.*] Bleaze, Mister Music-maker—a liddle museek.

Fritz. [*Plays.*]

[*THEODORE and TONI dance a few measures.*]

Toni. [*After a few moments.*] I can't. [*She falls back into a chair.*]

Theodore. [*Kisses her, seats himself beside her on the chair-arm.*]

Fritz. [*Stays at the piano, takes both CHRISTINE'S hands, looks at her.*]

Christine. [*As if awakening.*] Why don't you play on?

Fritz. [*Smiling.*] Enough for to-day. . .

Christine. That's the way I'd like to be able to play.

Fritz. Do you play much?

Christine. I don't get much chance; there's always something in the house that needs to be done. And then you know we have such a poor piano.

Fritz. I'd like to try it once. I'd like to see your room once, anyway.

Christine. [*Smiling.*] It isn't as pretty as here.

Fritz. And something else I'd like: to have you tell me about yourself . . . a whole lot . . . I really know so little about you.

Christine. There isn't much to tell.—And I haven't any secrets either . . . like some others.

Fritz. You never loved any man before?

Christine. [*Merely looks at him.*]

Fritz. [*Kisses her hands.*]

Christine. And never shall love any other.

Fritz. [*With an almost pained expression.*] Don't say that . . . don't . . . What do you know about it? . . . Does your father love you very much, Christine?

Christine. Oh, how much! . . . And there was a time when I used to tell him everything.

Fritz. Well, child, don't reproach yourself. People have to have secrets once in a while—that's the way of the world.

Christine. If I only knew that you loved me—it would all be right.

Fritz. Then don't you know?

Christine. If you would always talk to me like that then . . .

Fritz. Christine! You haven't a very comfortable seat, though.

Christine. Let me be—this is all right. [*She lays her head against the piano.*]

Fritz. [*Stands up and strokes her hair.*]

Christine. Oh, that feels good. [*The room is quiet.*]

Theodore. Where are the cigars, Fritz?

Fritz. [*Advances to him as he stands by the sideboard looking.*]

Toni. [*Has fallen asleep.*]

Fritz. [*Hands him a small box of cigars.*] And black coffee. [*He pours two cups.*]

Theodore. Children, don't you want some coffee, too?

Fritz. Toni, shall I pour a cup? . . .

Theodore. Let them sleep.—You ought not to drink coffee to-day. You ought to go to bed as soon as possible and try to sleep well.

Fritz. [*Looks at him and laughs bitterly.*]

Theodore. Well, things are as they are . . . and now it's not a question of being magnificent or deep, but of being as sensible as you can . . . that's the point . . . in such cases.

Fritz. You'll bring Lensky to me to-night, will you?

Theodore. That's nonsense. To-morrow is time enough.

Fritz. I beg you, bring him.

Theodore. All right, then.

Fritz. Will you take the girls home?

Theodore. Yes, and right away, too.—Toni! . . . Get up!

Toni. Oh, you're drinking black coffee. Give me some, too.

Theodore. Here you are, child.

Fritz. [*To CHRISTINE, going to her.*] Tired, my sweetheart?

Christine. How sweet, when you talk that way.

Fritz. Very tired?

Christine. [*Smiling.*] It's the wine.—And I have a little headache, too.

Fritz. Well, that will pass off in the open air.

Christine. Are we going now? Will you go with us?

Fritz. No, child. I'm going to stay right here. I have some things to do.

Christine. [*Recollecting.*] Now . . . What have you got to do now?

Fritz. [*Almost sternly.*] Christine, that's

something you must stop.—[*Gently.*] You see, I'm all used up . . . we walked around in the country for two hours to-day, Theodore and I.

Theodore. Oh, that was delightful. One of these days we'll all drive out into the country together.

Toni. Yes, that will be swell. And you'll put on your uniform.

Theodore. There's feeling for nature!

Christine. When shall I see you again?

Fritz. [*Somewhat nervously.*] I'll write you.

Christine. [*Sadly.*] Good-bye. [*Turns to go.*]

Fritz. [*Notices her sadness.*] To-morrow, Christine.

Christine. [*Happily.*] Truly?

Fritz. In the public gardens out there—at—say at six o'clock. . . . Will that suit you?

Christine. [*Nods.*]

Toni. [*To Fritz.*] Are you going with us, Fritz?

Fritz. No, I shall stay here.

Toni. He has an easy time of it. Think of the long journey home we have.

Fritz. But Toni, you have left almost the whole of that cake. Wait, I'll wrap it up for you, shall I?

Toni. [*To Theodore.*] Is that proper?

Fritz. [*Wraps up the cake.*]

Christine. She's like a little child.

Toni. [*To Fritz.*] Wait, I'll help you put out the candles. [*Puts out one after another.*] The candle on the desk is left burning.

Christine. Shan't I open the window for you? The air is so heavy. [*She opens the window, looks at the house opposite.*]

Fritz. There, children. Now I'll light you down the stairs.

Toni. Are the lights out on the stairs?

Theodore. Why, of course.

Christine. Oh, the air is nice, coming in here.

Toni. May breezes. . . . [*At the door to Fritz, who holds the candlestick.*] Well, we thank you for a warm welcome.

Theodore. [*Urging her forward.*] Come, come, come. . . .

Fritz. [*Goes out with them. The door stays open. The voices are heard outside. The outer door is heard to open.*]

Toni. Bah!

Theodore. Look out for the steps there. Toni. Thanks for the cake.

Theodore. Shh, you'll wake people up.

Christine. Good night.

Theodore. Good night.

[*Fritz can be heard to close and bolt the outer door. As he enters and puts the light on the desk, the street-door is heard to open and close.*]

Fritz. [*Goes to the window and bows, looking down.*]

Christine. Good night.

Toni. [*In high spirits.*] Good night, my darling child.

Theodore. [*Reprovingly.*] Toni! [*One can hear his words, her laughter; the steps die away. Theodore whistles the melody of the "Double Eagle," which is the last thing heard. Fritz looks out a few moments longer, then sinks down on the chair nearest the window.*]

ACT TWO

CHRISTINE'S room. Modest and neat.

Christine. [*Is dressing to go out.*]

Catherine. [*Enters after knocking.*] Good evening, Miss Christine.

Christine. [*Standing before the mirror, turns around.*] Good evening.

Catherine. You're just going out?

Christine. I'm not in such a great hurry.

Catherine. My husband sent me to ask if you wouldn't go and take supper with us in the Zoological Garden; there's a band there to-night.

Christine. Thank you very much, Mrs. Binder. I can't to-night. Another time, perhaps?—But you're not angry?

Catherine. Not a bit, why should I be? You'll probably have a better time than with us.

Christine. [*Looks at her.*]

Catherine. Has your father gone to the theatre?

Christine. Oh, no; he comes home first. It doesn't begin till half past seven now.

Catherine. That's so, I keep forgetting. I'll just wait for him. I've wanted for a long time to ask him about free tickets to the new piece. I suppose they can be had now?

Christine. Surely, nobody goes there any more now, when the evenings are so lovely.

Catherine. People like us never get a chance to go, unless we happen to know somebody in a theatre.—But don't let me keep you, Miss Christine, if you have to go. To be sure, my husband will be very sorry . . . and somebody else too.

Christine. Who?

Catherine. Binder's cousin goes with us, of course. Do you know, Miss Christine, that he has a steady job now?

Christine. [Indifferently.] Oh.

Catherine. And a very nice salary. And such a fine young fellow. And he has such respect for you—

Christine. Well—good-bye, Mrs. Binder.

Catherine. A body could tell him anything about you—he wouldn't believe a word of it. . . .

Christine. [Looks at her.]

Catherine. There are such men.

Christine. Good-bye, Mrs. Binder.

Catherine. Good-bye. . . . [Not too maliciously.] See that you aren't late to your appointment, Miss Christine.

Christine. What do you want of me, anyway?

Catherine. Why, nothing; you're quite right. You can't be young but once.

Christine. Good-bye.

Catherine. But I'd like to give you one piece of advice, just the same, Miss Christine: you ought to be a little more careful.

Christine. Why, what do you mean?

Catherine. Look,—Vienna is such a big city. . . . Do you have to have your meetings a hundred paces from your house?

Christine. I suppose that's nobody's business.

Catherine. I didn't want to believe it, when Binder told me. He saw you, you know. . . . Come, I said to him, you were mistaken, you saw somebody else. Miss Christine is not the girl to go walking with elegant young gentlemen in the evening, and if she did, she would be wise enough not to go walking through these streets. Well, says he, you can ask her yourself. And, says he, it's no wonder, either—she doesn't come to see us any more at all. Instead of that she's going around all the time with Toni Schlager, and what sort of company is that for a decent young girl?—You see, men are so low-minded, Miss Christine.—And of course he had to go and tell everything to Franz right away too; but he got

fine and angry, he did, and for Miss Christine he'd burn his hand off, and anybody that said anything about her would have to deal with him. And you're so domestic and were always so sweet with your old auntie—God grant her eternal rest—and you live so modestly and so retiringly and all that. . . . [Pause.] Perhaps you'll come to hear the music, after all?

Christine. No. . . .

Vyring. [Enters, a laurel branch in his hand.] Good evening.—Ah, Mrs. Binder. How are you?

Catherine. Thank you, well.

Vyring. And little Lena? And your husband?

Catherine. All well, God be praised.

Vyring. Well, that's fine. [To CHRISTINE.] You're still at home in all this fine weather?

Christine. I was just going out.

Vyring. That's right. The air outside,—it's something wonderful, eh, Mrs. Binder? I just came through the public gardens; the lilacs are in bloom, simply gorgeous. I broke the law a little, too. [Gives the branch to CHRISTINE.]

Christine. Thank you, father.

Catherine. Thank your lucky stars that the guard didn't catch you.

Vyring. Just go out there once, Mrs. Binder. It smells just as good as if I hadn't plucked the little twig.

Catherine. But if everybody thought the same—

Vyring. Well, that would be a mistake, to be sure.

Christine. Good-bye, father.

Vyring. If you could wait a few minutes, you might go to the theatre with me.

Christine. I . . . I promised Toni that I would go for her. . . .

Vyring. Oh, yes. Well, that's wiser, too. Youth belongs with youth. Good-bye, Christine.

Christine. [Kisses him.] Good-bye, Mrs. Binder. [Exit. VYRING'S eyes follow her tenderly.]

Catherine. That's a very close friendship with her and Miss Toni.

Vyring. Yes—I'm really glad that she has such company and doesn't have to sit at home all the time. What sort of a life does that girl have, anyway?

Catherine. Yes, to be sure.

Vyring. I can't tell you, Mrs. Binder, how it hurts me sometimes when I come home from rehearsal and find her sitting there and sewing; and then we've scarcely got up from the table at noon when she sits down again and goes to copying notes.

Catherine. Yes, yes, the millionaires have an easier time of it, to be sure, than we do. But how about her singing?

Vyring. It's not much. Her voice is big enough for a room, and her singing is good enough for her father—but you can't live on that.

Catherine. That's too bad.

Vyring. I am glad she sees it herself. She at least will be spared from disappointments. Of course I could get her into the chorus in our theatre.

Catherine. Of course, with such a figure!

Vyring. But there's no future there.

Catherine. A girl brings really a good many cares. When I think that in five or six years my little Lena will be a grown girl too—

Vyring. But why don't you sit down, Mrs. Binder?

Catherine. Oh, thanks; my husband is coming for me right away—I only came to invite Christine.

Vyring. Invite? . . .

Catherine. Yes, to hear the band in the Zoological Gardens. I thought that might cheer her up a bit. She really needs it.

Vyring. Couldn't do her a bit of harm, especially after this sad winter. Why doesn't she go with you?

Catherine. I don't know. . . . Perhaps because Binder's cousin is with us.

Vyring. Ah, that's possible. You know she can't stand him. She told me that herself.

Catherine. Well, why not? Franz is a very decent fellow—and now he's even got a steady job, and that's a piece of good fortune nowadays for a . . .

Vyring. For a . . . poor girl—

Catherine. For any girl.

Vyring. Now, tell me, Mrs. Binder, is a blooming young creature like that really made for nothing but for some such decent fellow who happens to have a steady job?

Catherine. Why, that's the best thing, after all. You can't wait for a count, and when one happens to come along, he usually takes his leave before he's married you.

[VYRING is at the window. Pause.] Well, and that's why I always say you can't be careful enough of a young girl, especially of the company she keeps—

Vyring. Well, I wonder if it's worth while to throw away all your young years like that.—And what good does all her goodness do a poor creature like that, even if, after years of waiting, the stocking-maker actually comes?

Catherine. Mr. Vyring, if my husband is a stocking-maker, he is an honest and good man, that I've never had to complain of. . . .

Vyring. [Soothingly.] Why, Mrs. Binder, do you think I'm aiming at you? . . . You didn't fling your youth out of the window, either.

Catherine. I have forgotten all about that.

Vyring. Don't say that.—You can say what you like, memories are, after all, the best thing in your life.

Catherine. I haven't any memories.

Vyring. Now, now. . . .

Catherine. And if a body does have such memories as you mean, what remains behind? . . . Regret.

Vyring. Well, and what remains behind—if she—doesn't even have anything to remember? If her whole life simply goes by [Simply and without emotion.], day after day, without happiness or love—I suppose you think that's better?

Catherine. But, Mr. Vyring, just think of the old lady, of your sister. . . . But it still pains you to have her spoken of, Mr. Vyring.

Vyring. It still pains me, yes.

Catherine. Of course . . . when two people have clung to each other so warmly. . . . I always said that brothers like you aren't found every day.

Vyring. [Makes a gesture of deprecation.]

Catherine. Well, it's true. You had to be both father and mother to her, and such a young man.

Vyring. Yes, yes—

Catherine. And that must be a kind of consolation, too. Then you know that you have been the benefactor and the protector of a poor girl like that—

Vyring. Yes, I imagined that, too—when she was still a pretty young girl—and God knows how clever and noble I thought my-

self. But then, later on, when the gray hairs came and the wrinkles, and one day passed like all the others—and her whole youth—and the girl gradually (you scarcely notice such things) turned into the old maid—then for the first time I began to see what I had done.

Catherine. But Mr. Vyring—

Vyring. I still see her before me, as she often used to sit opposite me in the evening, sitting by the lamp here in the room, and used to look at me with her quiet smile, with a certain resigned expression,—as if she wanted to thank me for something;—and I—I could have gladly gone down on my knees to her, and begged her forgiveness that I had guarded her so well against all dangers—and all happiness! [*Pause.*]

Catherine. And many a girl would be happy just the same, if she always had such a brother by her side . . . and nothing to regret. . . .

Toni. [*Enters.*] Good evening. . . . Why, it's all dark here, you can scarcely see a thing.—Ah, Mrs. Binder. Your husband is down-stairs waiting for you, Mrs. Binder. . . . Isn't Christine at home?

Vyring. She went out a quarter of an hour ago.

Catherine. Didn't you meet her? She was going to meet you.

Toni. No . . . we evidently missed each other.—You're going to hear the band to-night, your husband says.

Catherine. Yes, he is so fond of it. What a charming little hat you have on, Miss Toni. Isn't it a new one?

Toni. I should say not.—Don't you know this style any more? Last spring's style, only freshly trimmed.

Catherine. Did you trim it yourself?

Toni. Well, of course.

Vyring. So clever!

Catherine. Oh, yes—I keep forgetting that you worked for a year in a milliner shop.

Toni. I shall probably go back again. Mother wants me to, and that settles it.

Catherine. How is your mother?

Toni. Well enough—she has a little toothache—but the doctor says it's rheumatic pains.

Vyring. Well, it's time for me . . .

Catherine. I'll go right down with you, Mr. Vyring.

Toni. I'll go, too. But take your over-

coat, Mr. Vyring; it's going to be quite cool later on.

Vyring. You think so?

Catherine. Yes, indeed.—How can you be so foolish?

Christine. [*Enters.*]

Toni. Why, there she is.

Catherine. Back from your walk already?

Christine. Yes, Hello, Toni,—I have a headache. [*Sits herself.*]

Vyring. Headache?

Catherine. That's from the air.

Vyring. Come, what's the matter, Christine?—Please, Miss Toni, will you light the lamp?

Toni. [*Sets about it.*]

Christine. But I can do that myself.

Vyring. Let me see your face, Christine.

Christine. But, father, it is nothing; it's just the air outside.

Catherine. Lots of people can't stand the spring air.

Vyring. Miss Toni, you'll stay with Christine, won't you?

Toni. Of course I will.

Christine. But it isn't anything, father.

Toni. My mother doesn't make such a fuss over me, when I have a headache.

Vyring. [*To CHRISTINE, still sitting.*] Are you so tired?

Christine. [*Standing up.*] I'll get right up again. [*Smiling.*]

Vyring. There—now you look quite different again. [*To CATHERINE.*] She looks quite different when she smiles, don't you think? Well, good-bye Christine. [*Kisses her.*] And see to it that your little head isn't aching when I come home. [*He is at the door.*]

Catherine. [*Softly to CHRISTINE.*] Have you quarreled?

Christine. [*Makes an angry gesture.*]

Vyring. [*At the door.*] Mrs. Binder!

Toni. Good-bye.

[*Exeunt VYRING and CATHERINE.*]

Toni. Do you know what your headache comes from? From the sweet wine yesterday. I'm surprised that I don't feel the effects of it. But it was jolly, wasn't it?

Christine. [*Nods.*]

Toni. They're swell people, aren't they?—both of them, you can't say anything different, can you?—And such nice rooms as Fritz has, really splendid. At Dore's place . . . [*Interrupts herself.*] Oh, well.—Say

have you still got such a headache? Why don't you talk? . . . What's the matter with you?

Christine. Only think,—he didn't come.

Toni. Left you in the lurch, did he? Serves you right.

Christine. Why, what do you mean? What have I done?

Toni. You spoil him, that's all; you're too nice to him. A man just can't help getting tyrannical.

Christine. You don't know what you're talking about.

Toni. I do know quite well.—I've been angry with you this long time. He comes late to his appointments; he doesn't take you home; he goes into a theatre-box with strangers; he leaves you in the lurch—and you take it all calmly and make sheep's eyes [imitating] at him into the bargain.

Christine. Oh, don't talk so, don't make yourself out worse than you are. You love Theodore too.

Toni. Love him—of course I love him. But he won't find me grieving about him, and no man will, not any more. There isn't one of these men that is worth it.

Christine. I never heard you talk so, never!

Toni. No. Tina—we never talked like this before. I never dared, you see. You don't know how afraid of you I was! . . . But I always thought this: when you once get it, you'll get it bad. And the first time it certainly does give you a shaking up.—But you can be thankful that you've got such a good friend to help you through your first love affair.

Christine. Toni!

Toni. Don't you believe me when I say I'm a good friend to you? If I wasn't here to tell you that he's just a man like the rest, and that the whole manpack isn't worth a single bad hour, God knows what thoughts might come into your head. But I always will say, you never can believe a word men say.

Christine. What do you mean by saying men, men—what do I care about men!—I'm not asking about the others.—As long as I live I shall never think about another man.

Toni. Well, what are you thinking of? . . . has he? . . . Of course—such things

have happened; but then you ought to have gone at the affair differently.

Christine. Do keep still!

Toni. Well, what do you want? I can't help it if it's so.—You have to think about a thing like that. You simply have to wait till somebody comes that you can see is in earnest from his face. . . .

Christine. Toni, I can't stand such words to-day; they hurt me.

Toni. [Good-humoredly.] Oh, now, come—

Christine. Leave me alone . . . don't be angry . . . leave me alone!

Toni. Why should I be angry? I'll go. I didn't want to hurt you, Christine, truly not. [Turns to go.] Ah, Mr. Fritz.

Fritz. [Has entered.] Good evening.

Christine. [With a joyous cry.] Fritz! Fritz! [Rushes into his arms.]

Toni. [Steals out, her face saying: I'm not needed here.]

Fritz. [Freeing himself.] But—

Christine. They all say you will forsake me! But you won't, will you—not yet—not just yet?

Fritz. Who says it? What ails you? [Patting her.] But, sweetheart, . . . I really thought you would be startled when I suddenly came walking in here.

Christine. Oh—so long as I have you!

Fritz. Come, calm yourself—did you wait long for me?

Christine. Why didn't you come?

Fritz. I was detained and that made me late. Just now I was in the gardens and didn't find you—and was going home again. Suddenly I had such a longing, such a longing for your dear little face . . .

Christine. [Happily.] Oh, truly?

Fritz. And then, too, I had such an indescribable desire to see where you live—yes, really—I just had to see it once. And so I couldn't stand it and came up here . . . and so you really don't mind?

Christine. Oh, the ideal!

Fritz. Nobody saw me; and I knew your father was in the theatre.

Christine. What do I care about people!

Fritz. So this is—[Looks around the room.]—this is your room? Very pretty.

Christine. You can't see anything. [Is about to take the shade off the lamp.]

Fritz. No, don't do that, the light blinds me, it's better this way. So that's the win-

dow you've told me about, where you always sit and work, eh?—And the pretty view! [*Smiling.*] But just look at all the roofs you see.—And over there—what's that black thing I see over yonder?

Christine. That's Bald Mountain.

Fritz. Sure enough. You really have a better view than I.

Christine. Oh!

Fritz. I'd like to live up so high, and be able to overlook all the roofs; I think that is very nice. And I suppose the alley is quiet?

Christine. Oh, in the daytime there's noise enough.

Fritz. Do any teams go past?

Christine. Not often, but there's a locksmith in the house opposite.

Fritz. Oh, that's very unpleasant. [*He has sat down.*]

Christine. You get used to it; you don't hear it any more.

Fritz. [*Rises again hastily.*] Is this really my first visit? Everything seems so familiar to me. . . . I have imagined everything just this way. [*He starts to look around the room.*]

Christine. No, you mustn't look at anything.

Fritz. What are those pictures?

Christine. Oh, stop!

Fritz. Ah, I want to look at them. [*He takes the lamp and lights the pictures.*]

Christine. "Parting and Return."

Fritz. Sure enough—"Parting and Return."

Christine. I know well enough that the pictures aren't pretty.—There is a much better one in father's room.

Fritz. What picture is it?

Christine. It is a girl looking out of the window, and outside it's winter, you know—and its name is "Forsaken."

Fritz. Oh.—[*Puts down the lamp.*] Ah, and that's your library. [*Sits down beside the little book-rack.*]

Christine. You'd better not look at them.

Fritz. Why not? Ah! Schiller . . . Hauff . . . Pocket Encyclopedia . . . Goodness gracious!

Christine. It only goes to G.

Fritz. [*Smiling.*] Oh. . . . A book for old and young. . . . You look at the pictures in it, I suppose?

Christine. Of course I've looked at the pictures.

Fritz. [*Still seated.*] Who is the gentleman there on the stove?

Christine. Why, don't you know? That's Schubert.

Fritz. [*Rising.*] Sure enough.

Christine. Because father likes him so much. Father used to compose songs himself, very beautiful ones.

Fritz. And now he doesn't?

Christine. Not any more. [*Pause.*]

Fritz. [*Sits down.*] How cosy it is here.

Christine. Do you really like it?

Fritz. Very much. . . . What is that? [*Takes up a vase of artificial flowers standing on the table.*]

Christine. He's found something else!

Fritz. No, child, that doesn't belong in here. . . . It looks so dusty.

Christine. But they certainly aren't dusty.

Fritz. Artificial flowers always look dusty. . . . Real flowers ought to be in your room, flowers that are fresh and sweet-smelling. From now I shall . . . [*Breaks off, turns to conceal his emotion.*]

Christine. What? What were you going to say?

Fritz. Nothing, nothing.

Christine. [*Rises. Tenderly.*] What was it?

Fritz. I was going to say that I would send you fresh flowers to-morrow.

Christine. Well, and did you want to take it back so soon?—Of course! To-morrow you won't be thinking of me any more.

Fritz. [*Deprecatory gesture.*]

Christine. Certainly, it's out of sight, out of mind, with you.

Fritz. What are you saying?

Christine. Oh, yes, I know. I can tell.

Fritz. How can you imagine such a thing?

Christine. You are to blame yourself. Because you're always keeping secrets from me. . . . Because you never tell me about yourself.—What do you do all day?

Fritz. Why, sweetheart, that's very simple. I go to lectures—sometimes—then I go into the coffeehouse . . . then I read . . . or sometimes I play the piano—then I chat with somebody—then I go calling . . . but all that is of no account. It's tiresome to talk about it.—But now I must go, child.

Christine. So soon—

Fritz. Your father will soon be here.

Christine. Not for a long time yet, Fritz.
—Stay awhile—just a minute—stay awhile.

Fritz. And then I have . . . Theodore is expecting me. . . . I have something to talk over with him.

Christine. To-day?

Fritz. Surely to-day.

Christine. You can see him to-morrow, too.

Fritz. Perhaps I shan't be in Vienna to-morrow.

Christine. Not in Vienna?

Fritz. [Noticing her alarm, calmly, cheerfully.] Well, that wouldn't be anything wonderful, would it? I'm going away for a day—or perhaps for two, you child, you.

Christine. Where to?

Fritz. Where? . . . Oh, anywhere.—Good heavens, don't make up such a face. . . . I'm going out to my father's estate. . . . Well, is that so terrible to you?

Christine. And you never tell me about him, either.

Fritz. No; what a child you are. . . . You don't understand how nice it is to be all alone together. Tell me, don't you feel that?

Christine. No, it isn't nice at all that you never tell me anything about yourself. . . . You see, I'm interested in everything that touches you, . . . yes, everything.—I'd like to have more of you than just the one hour in the evening that we can spend together sometimes. Then you are gone again, and I don't know anything. . . . Then the whole night goes and a whole day, with so many hours in it—and still I don't know anything. And that often makes me so sad.

Fritz. Why does that make you sad?

Christine. Why, because I have such a longing for you as if you weren't in the same city at all, as if you were somewhere else. You simply disappear, as far as I am concerned, so far away. . . .

Fritz. [Somewhat impatient.] But —

Christine. Well, it's true!

Fritz. Come here to me. [She does so.] After all, the only thing you know is that I—that you love me at this moment. . . . [She wishes to speak.] Don't talk about eternity. [More to himself.] Perhaps there are moments that scatter around them the aroma of eternity.—That is the only one that we can understand, the only one that belongs to us. [He kisses her. Pause. He

risers. With a sudden outburst.] Oh, how beautiful it is here, how beautiful! [He stands at the window.] So far from the world you are in here, among all the many houses. . . . I seem to be so alone here, just with you. . . . [Softly.] So sheltered.

Christine. If you always talked like that . . . I could almost believe . . .

Fritz. Believe what, child?

Christine. That you loved me as I dreamed it—the day you kissed me the first time, . . . do you remember?

Fritz. [Passionately.] I do love you!—[He embraces her; tears himself from her.] But now let me go.

Christine. Are you sorry you said it, so soon again? You are free, you know you are free—you can go and leave me whenever you like . . . you haven't promised me anything—and I haven't demanded anything of you. . . . It doesn't matter what becomes of me, then: I've been happy for once, and that's all I ask of life. I only want you to know that and to believe that I never—loved any man before you, and that I never shall love any man—when you get tired of me —

Fritz. [More to himself.] Don't say it, don't say it—it sounds—so sweet.

[There is a knock.]

Fritz. [Starts.] That's probably Theodore.

Christine. [Startled.] He knows that you are here?

Theodore. [Enters.] Good evening.—Impudent of me, eh?

Christine. Do you have such important matters to discuss with him?

Theodore. I certainly have; and have been looking everywhere for him.

Fritz. [In a low voice.] Why didn't you wait below?

Christine. What are you whispering to him?

Theodore. [Wishing her to hear.] Why I didn't wait below. . . . Well, if I had absolutely known that you were here. . . . But I couldn't risk walking up and down outside for two hours.

Fritz. [Pointedly.] Then . . . you will go with me to-morrow?

Theodore. [Comprehending.] Surely.

Fritz. That's right.

Theodore. But I've been hurrying so that

I must beg permission to sit down for a few seconds.

Christine. Please do. [*Busies herself at the window.*]

Fritz. [*Softly.*] Anything new?—Did you find out about her?

Theodore. No. I merely came to get you because you are so incautious. What's the use of these unnecessary excitements? You ought to try to sleep. . . . It's rest you need. . . . [*CHRISTINE is near them again.*]

Fritz. Tell me, isn't this a dear little room?

Theodore. Yes, it is very nice. [*To CHRISTINE.*] Do you stay here at home all day long?—Really, it is very homelike here. A little high up for my taste.

Fritz. That's just what I like about it.

Theodore. But now I'm going to take Fritz away from you; we've got to get up early in the morning.

Christine. Then you are really going away?

Theodore. He will come again, Miss Christine.

Christine. Will you write to me?

Theodore. But if he comes back to-morrow —

Christine. Oh, I know he's going to stay longer than that.

Fritz. [*Starts.*]

Theodore. [*Notices it.*] Well, does he have to write immediately? I wouldn't have thought you so sentimental. . . . Well, . . . kiss each other good-bye, since it'll be so long. . . . [*Breaks off.*] I'm simply not here.

[*FRITZ and CHRISTINE kiss.*]

Theodore. [*Takes out a cigarette-case and puts a cigarette in his mouth; seeks vainly for a match.*] Tell me, dear Christine, haven't you a match?

Christine. Oh, yes, there are some. [*Points to a holder on the chest of drawers.*]

Theodore. It's empty.

Christine. I'll get you one. [*Hurries into adjoining room.*]

Fritz. [*Looking after her.*] Oh, God, how such hours lie to us!

Theodore. Why, what hours?

Fritz. I'm almost ready to believe that my happiness is here, that this sweet girl—
[*Breaks off.*—but this hour is a tremendous liar. . . .

Theodore. Absurd talk. . . . How you will laugh at it.

Fritz. I don't think I shall have any time for that.

Christine. [*Returns.*] Here you are.

Theodore. Thanks very much. . . . Good-bye, then.—[*To FRITZ.*] Well, what do you want now?

Fritz. [*Looks back and forth around the room, as if to deepen the impression in his mind.*] It's hard to leave it.

Christine. Oh, make fun of it if you like.

Theodore. [*Firmly.*] Come.—Good-bye, Christine.

Fritz. Farewell.

Christine. Till we meet again. [*THEODORE and FRITZ exeunt. She stands a moment, anxious, then goes to the open door, softly.*]
Fritz!

Fritz. [*Comes back again and presses her to his heart.*] Farewell.

ACT THREE

The same scene as the second act. It is noon.

Christine. [*Alone, sitting sewing by the window; lays down her work.*]

Lena. [*Enters.*] Good day, Miss Christine.

Christine. [*Very absent-mindedly.*] Good day, child; what is it?

Lena. Mother sent me to see if I could get the theatre tickets.

Christine. Father hasn't got home yet, child; will you wait?

Lena. No, Miss Christine; then I'll come after lunch again.

Christine. Very well.

Lena. [*Going, turns back.*] And mother said to ask Miss Christine if her headache was gone yet.

Christine. Yes, child.

Lena. Good-bye, Miss Christine.

Christine. Good-bye.

Toni. [*Enters just as LENA is going out.*]

Lena. Good day, Miss Toni.

Toni. Hello, little monkey!

Lena. [*Exit.*]

Christine. [*Rises to meet TONI.*] Then they are back?

Toni. How should I know?

Christine. And you haven't any letter, nothing?

Toni. No.

Christine. You have no letter, either?

Toni. What should we write to each other?

Christine. They've been gone since day before yesterday.

Toni. Yes, yes, that's not such a long time. You needn't make such a fuss on that account. I don't understand you . . . and how you look,—your face is all tear-stained. Your father will surely notice it when he comes home.

Christine. [*Simply.*] My father knows everything.

Toni. [*Almost frightened.*] What?

Christine. I told him.

Toni. That's another of your bright ideas. But of course your face shows everything. And does he know who it is?

Christine. Yes.

Toni. And did he scold?

Christine. [*Shakes her head.*]

Toni. What did he say, then?

Christine. Nothing. . . . He went away very quietly, as usual.

Toni. And still it was stupid of you to tell. You'll see. . . . Do you know why your father said nothing? Because he thinks Fritz will marry you.

Christine. Why do you speak of that?

Toni. Do you know what I think?

Christine. Well, what?

Toni. That this whole story of a journey is a lie.

Christine. What?

Toni. Perhaps they haven't gone away at all.

Christine. They have gone—I know they have. Yesterday evening I went past his house; the blinds were down; he isn't there.

Toni. Oh, I believe that. They're away all right. But they won't come back—at least not to us.

Christine. [*Anxiously.*] Oh—

Toni. Well, it's possible.

Christine. You say that so calmly.

Toni. Why yes—whether it happens to-day or tomorrow—or in six months—it comes to the same thing.

Christine. Oh, you don't know what you are saying. . . . You don't know Fritz. . . . He isn't like what you think. I found that out when he was here in my room the other day. Often he only pretends to be indifferent—but he does love me. . . . [*As if she*

divined Toni's reply.] Yes, yes, not forever, I know that . . . but it can't stop all at once!

Toni. Well, I don't know Fritz so well.

Christine. He will come back, and Theodore will come back too; I am sure of it.

Toni. [*Makes a gesture indicating indifference.*]

Christine. Toni . . . do me a favor.

Toni. Don't be so excited—what is it you want?

Christine. Go to Theodore's, it's right near here. . . . Ask in the house whether he's got back yet, and if he isn't back, perhaps they'll know when he's coming.

Toni. I'm not going to run after a man.

Christine. He doesn't need to find it out. Perhaps you'll happen to meet him. It's almost one o'clock now—he'll be just going to lunch.

Toni. Why don't you go and ask at Fritz's house?

Christine. I'm afraid to—he doesn't like that. . . . And he is certainly not back yet. But perhaps Theodore is back by now and knows when Fritz is coming. Oh, please Toni!

Toni. You're so childish sometimes.

Christine. Do it for me! Go and ask! It won't do any harm.

Toni. Well, if it means so much to you I'll go. But it won't do much good. I'm sure they aren't back yet.

Christine. And you'll come right back, won't you?

Toni. Yes, yes; mother can wait lunch a little.

Christine. I thank you, Toni, you're so good.

Toni. Of course I'm good—but now you be sensible, won't you? . . . Well, so long.

Christine. Oh, thank you!

Toni. [*Exit.*]

Christine. [*Arranges the room, folds up her sewing, etc. Then she goes to window and looks out. After a moment VYRING enters without her seeing him at first. He is in great excitement, looks anxiously at his daughter.*]

Vyring. She knows nothing yet, nothing. [*He remains standing in the doorway and does not venture to take a step into the room.*]

Christine. [*Turns, sees him, starts.*]

Vyring. [*Tries to smile. He steps in.*]

Well, Christine. . . . [*As if calling her to him.*]

Christine. [*Goes to him, as if to fall before him.*]

Vyring. [*Prevents her.*] Well . . . what are you thinking of, Christine? We . . . [*With a new resolve.*] We'll just forget it, shall we?

Christine. [*Raises her head.*]

Vyring. Why yes . . . I—and you!

Christine. Father, didn't you understand me this morning?

Vyring. Well, what would you have, Christine? . . . I surely must tell you what I think about it, don't you think so? Well, then . . .

Christine. Father, what does this mean?

Vyring. Come here, my child. . . . Listen to me quietly. You know I listened quietly to you, when you told me. We must—

Christine. Oh, I beg you, don't speak to me so, father. If you have thought it over, and find that you can't forgive me, then drive me away—but don't speak that way.

Vyring. Just listen quietly to me, Christine. You can still do whatever you will. . . . See, Christine, you are so young. Haven't you ever thought . . . [*With great hesitation.*] that the whole thing might be a mistake?

Christine. Why do you say that to me, father? I know so well what I have done—and I don't ask anything—not from you and not from anybody in the world, if it has been a mistake. . . . I just told you, drive me away, but . . .

Vyring. [*Interrupting.*] How can you talk so. . . . Even if it was a mistake, is that any reason for getting desperate right away, such a young creature as you are? Just think how beautiful, how wonderful life is. Just think how many things there are to give you joy, how much youth and how much happiness still lies before you. . . . See, I don't have much of the world any more, and even for me life is still beautiful—and I can still look forward to so many things. How we shall be together—how we shall plan our life, you and I—how you will begin to sing again, now that the beautiful days are here—and how we'll take a whole day off, when summer comes, and go out into the green country—Oh, there are so many lovely things . . . so many. It is silly

to give up everything, because one must give up his first happiness, or anything that he thought was that.

Christine. Why . . . [*Anxiously.*] then must I give it up?

Vyring. Well, was it happiness? Do you really think, Christine, that you had to tell your father today? I have known it for a long time—and I knew too that you would tell me. No, it never was happiness for you. . . . Don't I know those eyes? There wouldn't have been tears in them so often, and those cheeks wouldn't have been pale so much, if you had loved a man who was worthy of it.

Christine. Why, how can you . . . what do you know . . . what have you heard?

Vyring. Nothing, nothing at all. . . . But you yourself told me what he is. . . . A young fellow like that—what does he know? Has he the faintest idea of what falls into his hands—does he know the difference between the true and the false—and all your mad love—did he ever understand that?

Christine. [*More and more alarmed.*] You and he. . . . Were you at his house?

Vyring. Why, what are you thinking of! He went away, didn't he? But Christine, I still have a head on my shoulders, and my eyes in my head. Come, child, forget about it, do! Your future lies in an altogether different place. You can, you will still be as happy as you deserve. You will find a man some time who will know what a treasure he has in you.

Christine. [*Has hurried to the chest of drawers to get her hat.*]

Vyring. What are you doing?

Christine. I'm going out.

Vyring. Where to?

Christine. To him . . . to him.

Vyring. What are you thinking of?

Christine. You're keeping something from me—let me go.

Vyring. [*Holding her firmly.*] Come to your senses, child. He isn't there at all. Perhaps he's gone away for a very long time. . . . Stay here; what do you want there? . . . Tomorrow or this evening I'll go there with you. You can't go out on the street like that . . . do you know how you look?

Christine. You will go with me?

Vyring. I promise you I will. Only stay here now; sit down and come to your senses

again. It's enough to make a man laugh, almost, to look at you . . . and all for nothing. Can't you stand it here with your father at all any more?

Christine. What is it you know?

Vyring. [More and more helpless.] What should I know? . . . I know that I love you, that you are my only child, that you must stay with me all the time—

Christine. Enough—let me go. [She wrests herself from him and opens the door; TONI appears in it.]

Toni. [Utters a little cry, as CHRISTINE rushes toward her.] Why do you frighten me so?

Christine. [Steps back, seeing THEODORE behind TONI.]

Theodore. [Remains in the doorway; he is dressed in black.]

Christine. What . . . what is . . . [No answer. She looks THEODORE in the face; he cannot meet her eyes.] Where is he, where is he? . . . [In the greatest terror. No answer; all faces are embarrassed and sad.] Where is he? [To THEODORE.] Speak, can't you?

Theodore. [Tries to speak.]

Christine. [Looks at him wide-eyed, looks around her, comprehends the look on their faces, her face shows the dawn of this understanding, she utters a terrible cry.] Theodore . . . he is . . .

Theodore. [Nods.]

Christine. [Seizes her forehead, cannot understand it; she goes to THEODORE, takes him by the arm, as if demented.] He is . . . dead? [As if asking herself.]

Vyring. My child—

Christine. [Thrusting him away.] Speak, Theodore, speak!

Theodore. You know all.

Christine. I know nothing. . . . I don't know what has happened . . . do you think . . . I can't hear everything now? . . . how did it happen . . . Father . . . Theodore . . . [To TONI.] You know it too.

Theodore. An unfortunate accident.

Christine. What, what?

Theodore. He fell.

Christine. What does that mean: he . . .

Theodore. He fell in a duel.

Christine. [Shrieks. She is about to fall, VYRING sustains her, motions to THEODORE to go. She notes it and seizes him.] Stay

here. . . . I must know all. Do you think you can keep anything from me now?

Theodore. What else do you want to know?

Christine. Why—why did he fight a duel?

Theodore. I don't know the reason.

Christine. With whom, with whom? . . . You surely know who killed him? . . . Well, well, who . . .

Theodore. Nobody you know.

Christine. Who, who?

Toni. Christine!

Christine. Who? You tell me! [To TONI.] . . . Father, you tell me . . . [No answer. She starts to go out. VYRING holds her back.] Can't I know who killed him, and for what cause?

Theodore. It was . . . a trivial cause . . .

Christine. You're not telling the truth . . . why, why . . .

Theodore. Dear Christine. . . .

Christine. [As if about to interrupt, goes up to him; looks at him in silence, then suddenly shrieks.] On account of a woman?

Theodore. No—

Christine. Yes—for a woman . . . [Turning to TONI.] for that woman—for that woman that he loved. And her husband—yes, yes, her husband killed him . . . And I . . . what am I? What was I to him? . . . Theodore . . . haven't you anything for me at all . . . didn't he write down anything? . . . Didn't he tell you anything for me? Didn't you find anything . . . a letter . . . a note . . .

Theodore. [Shakes his head.]

Christine. And that evening . . . when he was here, when you came to get him . . . he knew it, he knew then that he perhaps would never . . . And he went away from here to be killed for another woman. No, no, it is not possible . . . didn't he know what he was to me . . . didn't . . .

Theodore. He did know. On the last morning, when we drove out together . . . he spoke of you too.

Christine. He spoke of me too! Of me too! And of what else? Of how many other people, of how many other things, that meant just as much to him as I did? Of me too! Oh, God! . . . And of his father and his mother and his room and of the springtime and of the city and of everything, everything that belonged to his life and that he had to give up just as much

as he gave up me—of everything he talked to you . . . and of me too . . .

Theodore. [*Moved.*] He surely loved you.

Christine. Love? He? I was nothing to him but a pastime—and he died for another woman! And I—I worshiped him! Didn't he know that? . . . That I gave him everything I could give, that I would have died for him—that he was my God and my bliss of Heaven—didn't he see that at all? He could go away from me with a smile, out of my room, and be shot down for another woman. . . . Father, father, can you understand that?

Vyring. [*Goes to her.*] Christine!

Theodore. [*To TONI.*] Child, you might have spared me this.

Toni. [*Looks at him venomously.*]

Theodore. I have had enough distress . . . these last days . . .

Christine. [*With sudden resolve.*] Theodore, take me to him—I want to see him—once more I want to see him—his face—Theodore, take me to him.

Theodore. [*With a gesture, hesitatingly.*] No. . . .

Christine. Why "no"? You can't refuse me that! Surely I can see him once more?

Theodore. It is too late.

Christine. Too late? To see his corpse . . . is it too late? Yes . . . yes . . . [*She does not understand.*]

Theodore. He was buried this morning.

Christine. [*With the greatest horror.*] Buried . . . And I didn't know about it? They shot him . . . and put him in his coffin and carried him out and buried him down in the earth—and I couldn't even see him once more? He's been dead two days—and you didn't come and tell me?

Theodore. [*Much moved.*] In these two days I have . . . You cannot dream all that I . . . Consider that it was my duty to notify his parents—I had to think of many things—and then my own state of mind.

Christine. Your . . .

Theodore. And then the . . . it was done

very quietly. . . . Only the closest relatives and friends . . .

Christine. The closest —? And I —? . . . What am I?

Toni. They would have asked that.

Christine. What am I? Less than all the rest —? Less than his relatives, less than —you?

Vyring. My child, my child. Come to me, to me. . . . [*He embraces her. To THEODORE.*] Go . . . leave me alone with her.

Theodore. I am very . . . [*With tears in his voice.*] I never suspected . . .

Christine. Never suspected what? That I loved him? [*VYRING draws her to him; THEODORE looks down; TONI stands near CHRISTINE. Freeing herself.*] Take me to his grave!

Vyring. No, no —

Toni. Don't go, Christine.

Theodore. Christine . . . later . . . tomorrow . . . when you are calmer —

Christine. Tomorrow? When I shall be calmer? And in a month completely consoled, eh? And in six months I can laugh again, can I? [*Laughing shrilly.*] And then when will the next lover come?

Vyring. Christine . . .

Christine. Stay here, then . . . I can find the way alone . . .

Vyring and Toni. [*Together.*] Don't go.

Christine. It's even better . . . if I . . . let me go, let go.

Vyring. Christine, stay here.

Toni. Don't go! Perhaps you'll find the other one there—praying.

Christine. [*To herself, her eyes fixed.*] I won't pray there . . . no . . . [*She rushes out; the others speechless for the moment.*]

Vyring. Hurry after her.

[*THEODORE and TONI exeunt.*]

Vyring. I can't, I can't . . . [*He goes painfully from the door to the window.*] What does she want . . . what does she want . . . [*He looks through the window.*] She won't come back—she won't come back! [*He sinks to the floor, sobbing loudly.*]

THE END

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

By OSCAR WILDE

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OSCAR WILDE AND HIS PLAYS

OSCAR WILDE was born in Dublin in 1854, the son of a distinguished physician. He was educated in Trinity College, Dublin, and at Oxford University, travelled on the Continent, settled in London, and became known with the publication of his first volume of poems in 1881. His reputation grew with the subsequent publication of his brilliant essays, his short stories, his novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and the production of his plays. He had reached the pinnacle of his fame when, as the result of his notorious trial, he spent two years in prison. After his release, he lived in France and Italy, and died in Paris in 1900.

As a dramatist, Wilde is an anomaly. He added nothing new to English drama. His technique, in its insincerity, its sheer theatricality, followed the worst of the traditional practices. His characters are usually mere puppets, and at best mere types. And yet six of his eight plays are famous apart from the fame of their author. They were at once successful; they have held the stage; they can still entertain an audience. They are essentially the work of a brilliant writer who turned playwright in order to exhibit his virtuosity.

Between 1892 and 1895, when Wilde's more important plays were written, new currents were moving in English drama. Pinero and Jones had long since at least pointed the way towards a more truthful and sincere use of material and a more rational technique. Wilde shows nothing of this. Great writer though he was, he made plays only for immediate success in the theatre, to please his audience at any cost of sincerity and verisimilitude.

His "serious" plays, such as the celebrated *Lady Windermere's Fan*, when examined in the light of their melodramatic plots and their improbable characterization, show themselves as pieces of egregious trickery. The supposedly serious talk in them is often as unnatural as talk could be (and Wilde of course knew this perfectly well). Their saving grace—and it is a charming grace—is the brilliant persiflage that is put, as a rule, into the mouths of the minor puppets who people the background. To all of this, however, the one-act play *Salome*, founded on the biblical story of Herod and John the Baptist, is an exception. It is a genuine work of art, exquisitely fashioned, a very cameo of style.

Aside from *Salome*, Wilde's masterpiece and his one really sincere work is *The Importance of Being Earnest*. That this flippant piece of studied insincerity should be a sincere work of art is a paradox. But here Wilde is himself; here he does what he can naturally do well. He has taken whatever is good in the style of his melodramas, that is, the inimitably clever talk, and rounded out a play with it—a play that is little but clever talk. And his light dialogue is as good as his serious dialogue is bad; that is, it is distinctly the best of its kind. Since *The School for Scandal* nothing else has come near it. With that sparkling play it belongs as an "artificial comedy" or "comedy of wit," and traces its lineage straight back through Sheridan to Congreve.

With a perfectly constructed plot, the very essence of farce; with characters each of whom assumes a consistent and steadily maintained pose; with speech that reaches the very heights of superficial cleverness and satirical point, each line of which ripples into laughter, *The Importance of Being Earnest* has already become a classic, differing from most other classics in that it is actually read and that it often appears on the stage. When it was first produced in London, most of the critics were horrified or disgusted. Some of them actually called it "an insult to the public"—why, heaven only knows. Bernard Shaw rather liked it. When produced in New York it was generally considered only a flippant trifle. But the flippant trifle at once took the secure place on the stage that was its by right, and has ever since retained it though, no doubt, as frivolous and unashamed as ever. Its revivals have been countless and will, doubtless, continue; for its situations are perennially amusing and the jewels of its amazing dialogue still sparkle brilliantly after a generation of constant wear.

The Importance of Being Earnest was first produced in London, on February 14, 1895. Its first production in America was in New York on April 22, 1895.

CHARACTERS

JOHN WORTHING, J.P., *of the Manor House, Woolton, Hertfordshire*

ALGERNON MONCRIEF, *his friend*

THE REVEREND CANON CHASUBLE, *rector of Woolton*

LADY BRACKNELL

THE HONORABLE GWENDOLEN FAIRFAX, *her daughter*

CECILY CARDEW, *John Worthing's ward*

MISS PRISM, *Cecily's governess*

MERRIMAN, *a butler*

LANE, *a manservant*

The action takes place in London and at a country house in Hertfordshire within the last decade of the nineteenth century

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

ACT ONE

The morning-room in ALGERNON MONCRIEF'S flat in Half-Moon Street, London. The room is luxuriously and artistically furnished. The sound of a piano is heard in the adjoining room.

LANE is arranging afternoon tea on the table, and after the music has ceased, ALGERNON enters.

ALGERNON. Did you hear what I was playing, Lane?

Lane. I didn't think it polite to listen, sir.

ALGERNON. I'm sorry for that, for your sake. I don't play accurately—anyone can play accurately—but I play with wonderful expression. As far as the piano is concerned, sentiment is my forte. I keep science for Life.

Lane. Yes, sir.

ALGERNON. And, speaking of the science of Life, have you got the cucumber sandwiches cut for Lady Bracknell?

Lane. Yes, sir.

[LANE hands the sandwiches on a salver.

ALGERNON inspects them, takes two, and sits down on the sofa]

ALGERNON. Oh . . . by the way, Lane, I see from your book that on Thursday night, when Lord Shoreman and Mr. Worthing were dining with me, eight bottles of champagne were entered as having been consumed.

Lane. Yes, sir; eight bottles and a pint.

ALGERNON. Why is it that at a bachelor's establishment the servants invariably drink the champagne? I ask merely for information.

Lane. I attribute it to the superior quality of the wine, sir. I have often observed that in married households the champagne is rarely of a first-rate brand.

ALGERNON. Good Heavens! Is marriage so demoralizing as that?

Lane. I believe it is a very pleasant state, sir. I have had very little experience of it myself up to the present. I have only been married once. That was in consequence of a misunderstanding between myself and a young woman.

ALGERNON [languidly]. I don't know that I am much interested in your family life, Lane.

Lane. No, sir; it is not a very interesting subject. I never think of it myself.

ALGERNON. Very natural, I am sure. That will do, Lane, thank you.

Lane. Thank you, sir. [He goes out]

ALGERNON. Lane's views on marriage seem somewhat lax. Really, if the lower orders don't set us a good example, what on earth is the use of them? They seem, as a class, to have absolutely no sense of moral responsibility. [LANE enters]

Lane. Mr. Ernest Worthing.

[JACK enters. LANE goes out]

ALGERNON. How are you, my dear Ernest? What brings you up to town?

JACK. Oh, pleasure, pleasure! What else should bring one anywhere? Eating as usual, I see, Algy!

ALGERNON [stiffly]. I believe it is customary in good society to take some slight refreshment at five o'clock. Where have you been since last Thursday?

JACK [sitting down on the sofa]. In the country.

ALGERNON. What on earth do you do there?

JACK [pulling off his gloves]. When one is in town, one amuses oneself. When one is in the country, one amuses other people. It is excessively boring.

ALGERNON. And who are the people you amuse?

JACK [airily]. Oh, neighbours, neighbours.

ALGERNON. Got nice neighbours in your part of Shropshire?

JACK. Perfectly horrid! Never speak to one of them.

ALGERNON. How immensely you must amuse them! [He goes over and takes a sandwich] By the way, Shropshire is your county, is it not?

JACK. Eh? Shropshire? Yes, of course. Hallo! Why all these cups? Why cucumber sandwiches? Why such reckless extravagance in one so young? Who is coming to tea?

ALGERNON. Oh! merely Aunt Augusta and Gwendolen.

Jack. How perfectly delightful!

Algernon. Yes, that is all very well; but I am afraid Aunt Augusta won't quite approve of your being here.

Jack. May I ask why?

Algernon. My dear fellow, the way you flirt with Gwendolen is perfectly disgraceful. It is almost as bad as the way Gwendolen flirts with you.

Jack. I am in love with Gwendolen. I have come up to town expressly to propose to her.

Algernon. I thought you had come up for pleasure? . . . I call that business.

Jack. How utterly unromantic you are!

Algernon. I really don't see anything romantic in proposing. It is very romantic to be in love. But there is nothing romantic about a definite proposal. Why, one may be accepted! One usually is, I believe. Then the excitement is all over. The very essence of romance is uncertainty. If ever I get married, I'll certainly try to forget the fact.

Jack. I have no doubt about that, dear Algy. The Divorce Court was specially invented for people whose memories are so curiously constituted.

Algernon. Oh! there is no use speculating on that subject. Divorces are made in Heaven—

[JACK puts out his hand to take a sandwich. ALGERNON at once interferes]

Please don't touch the cucumber sandwiches. They are ordered specially for Aunt Augusta. [He takes one and eats it]

Jack. Well, you have been eating them all the time.

Algernon. That is quite a different matter. She is my aunt. [He takes a plate from below] Have some bread and butter. The bread and butter is for Gwendolen. Gwendolen is devoted to bread and butter.

Jack [advancing to the table and helping himself]. And very good bread and butter it is, too.

Algernon. Well, my dear fellow, you need not eat as if you were going to eat it all. You behave as if you were married to her already. You are not married to her already, and I don't think you ever will be.

Jack. Why on earth do you say that?

Algernon. Well, in the first place girls never marry the men they flirt with. Girls don't think it right.

Jack. Oh, that is nonsense!

Algernon. It isn't. It is a great truth. It accounts for the extraordinary number of bachelors that one sees all over the place. In the second place, I don't give my consent.

Jack. Your consent!

Algernon. My dear fellow, Gwendolen is my first cousin. And before I allow you to marry her, you will have to clear up the whole question of Cecily. [He rings the bell]

Jack. Cecily! What on earth do you mean? What do you mean, Algy, by Cecily? I don't know anyone of the name of Cecily.

[Lane enters]

Algernon. Bring me that cigarette case Mr. Worthing left in the smoking-room the last time he dined here.

Lane. Yes, sir. [He goes out]

Jack. Do you mean to say you have had my cigarette case all this time? I wish to goodness you had let me know. I have been writing frantic letters to Scotland Yard about it. I was very nearly offering a large reward.

Algernon. Well, I wish you would offer one. I happen to be more than usually hard up.

Jack. There is no good offering a large reward now that the thing is found.

[Lane enters with the cigarette case on a salver. ALGERNON takes it at once. LANE goes out]

Algernon. I think that is rather mean of you, Ernest, I must say. [He opens the case and examines it] However, it makes no matter, for, now that I look at the inscription, I find that the thing isn't yours after all.

Jack. Of course it's mine. [Moving to him] You have seen me with it a hundred times, and you have no right whatsoever to read what is written inside. It is a very ungentlemanly thing to read a private cigarette case.

Algernon. Oh! it is absurd to have a hard-and-fast rule about what one should read and what one shouldn't. More than half of modern culture depends on what one shouldn't read.

Jack. I am quite aware of the fact, and I don't propose to discuss modern culture. It isn't the sort of thing one should talk of in private. I simply want my cigarette case back.

Algernon. Yes; but this isn't your cigarette case. This cigarette case is a present from someone of the name of Cecily, and you said you didn't know anyone of that name.

Jack. Well, if you want to know, Cecily happens to be my aunt.

Algernon. Your aunt!

Jack. Yes. Charming old lady she is, too. Lives at Tunbridge Wells. Just give it back to me, Algy.

Algernon [retreating to the back of the sofa]. But why does she call herself little Cecily if she is your aunt and lives at Tunbridge Wells? [Reading] "From little Cecily with her fondest love."

Jack [moving to the sofa and kneeling upon it]. My dear fellow, what on earth is there in that? Some aunts are tall, some aunts are not tall. That is a matter that surely an aunt may be allowed to decide for herself. You seem to think that every aunt should be exactly like your aunt! That is absurd! For Heaven's sake give me back my cigarette case. [He follows ALGERNON round the room]

Algernon. Yes. But why does your aunt call you her uncle? "From little Cecily, with her fondest love to her dear Uncle Jack." There is no objection, I admit, to an aunt being a small aunt, but why an aunt, no matter what her size may be, should call her own nephew her uncle, I can't quite make out. Besides, your name isn't Jack at all; it is Ernest.

Jack. It isn't Ernest; it's Jack.

Algernon. You have always told me it was Ernest. I have introduced you to everyone as Ernest. You answer to the name of Ernest. You look as if your name was Ernest. You are the most earnest looking person I ever saw in my life. It is perfectly absurd your saying that your name isn't Ernest. It's on your cards. Here is one of them [taking it from the case]: "Mr. Ernest Worthing, B 4, The Albany." I'll keep this as a proof your name is Ernest if ever you attempt to deny it to me, or to Gwendolen, or to anyone else. [He puts the card in his pocket]

Jack. Well, my name is Ernest in town and Jack in the country, and the cigarette case was given to me in the country.

Algernon. Yes, but that does not account for the fact that your small Aunt Cecily, who lives at Tunbridge Wells, calls you her

dear uncle. Come, old boy, you had much better have the thing out at once.

Jack. My dear Algy, you talk exactly as if you were a dentist. It is very vulgar to talk like a dentist when one isn't a dentist. It produces a false impression.

Algernon. Well, that is exactly what dentists always do. Now, go on! Tell me the whole thing. I may mention that I have always suspected you of being a confirmed and secret Bunburyist; and I am quite sure of it now.

Jack. Bunburyist? What on earth do you mean by a Bunburyist?

Algernon. I'll reveal to you the meaning of that incomparable expression as soon as you are kind enough to inform me why you are Ernest in town and Jack in the country.

Jack. Well, produce my cigarette case first.

Algernon. Here it is. [He hands the cigarette case] Now produce your explanation and pray make it improbable. [He sits on the sofa]

Jack. My dear fellow, there is nothing improbable about my explanation at all. In fact it's perfectly ordinary. Old Mr. Thomas Cardew, who adopted me when I was a little boy, made me in his will guardian to his grand-daughter, Miss Cecily Cardew. Cecily, who addresses me as her uncle from motives of respect that you could not possibly appreciate, lives at my place in the country under the charge of her admirable governess, Miss Prism.

Algernon. Where is that place in the country, by the way?

Jack. That is nothing to you, dear boy. You are not going to be invited. . . . I may tell you candidly that the place is not in Shropshire.

Algernon. I suspected that, my dear fellow! I have Bunbured all over Shropshire on two separate occasions. Now, go on. Why are you Ernest in town and Jack in the country?

Jack. My dear Algy, I don't know whether you will be able to understand my real motives. You are hardly serious enough. When one is placed in the position of guardian, one has to adopt a very high moral tone on all subjects. It's one's duty to do so. And as a high moral tone can hardly be said to conduce very much to either one's health or one's happiness, in

order to get up to town I have always pretended to have a younger brother of the name of Ernest, who lives in the Albany, and gets into the most dreadful scrapes. That, my dear Algy, is the whole truth pure and simple.

Algernon. The truth is rarely pure and never simple. Modern life would be very tedious if it were either, and modern literature a complete impossibility!

Jack. That wouldn't be at all a bad thing.

Algernon. Literary criticism is not your forte, my dear fellow. Don't try it. You should leave that to people who haven't been at a University. They do it so well in the daily papers. What you really are is a Bunburyist. I was quite right in saying you were a Bunburyist. You are one of the most advanced Bunburyists I know.

Jack. What on earth do you mean?

Algernon. You have invented a very useful younger brother called Ernest, in order that you may be able to come up to town as often as you like. I have invented an invaluable permanent invalid called Bunbury, in order that I may be able to go down into the country whenever I choose. Bunbury is perfectly invaluable. If it wasn't for Bunbury's extraordinary bad health, for instance, I wouldn't be able to dine with you at Willis's to-night, for I have been really engaged to Aunt Augusta for more than a week.

Jack. I haven't asked you to dine with me anywhere to-night.

Algernon. I know. You are absolutely careless about sending out invitations. It is very foolish of you. Nothing annoys people so much as not receiving invitations.

Jack. You had much better dine with your Aunt Augusta.

Algernon. I haven't the smallest intention of doing anything of the kind. To begin with, I dined there on Monday, and once a week is quite enough to dine with one's own relatives. In the second place, whenever I do dine there, I am always treated as a member of the family, and sent down with either no woman at all, or two. In the third place, I know perfectly well whom she will place me next to, to-night. She will place me next Mary Farquhar, who always flirts with her own husband across the dinner-table. That is not very

pleasant. Indeed, it is not even decent . . . and that sort of thing is enormously on the increase. The amount of women in London who flirt with their own husbands is perfectly scandalous. It looks so bad. It is simply washing one's clean linen in public. Besides, now that I know you to be a confirmed Bunburyist, I naturally want to talk to you about Bunburying. I want to tell you the rules.

Jack. I'm not a Bunburyist at all. If Gwendolen accepts me, I am going to kill my brother. Indeed I think I'll kill him in any case: Cecily is a little too much interested in him. It is rather a bore. So I am going to get rid of Ernest. And I strongly advise you to do the same with Mr. . . . with your invalid friend who has the absurd name.

Algernon. Nothing will induce me to part with Bunbury, and if you ever get married, which seems to me extremely problematic, you will be very glad to know Bunbury. A man who marries without knowing Bunbury has a very tedious time of it.

Jack. That is nonsense. If I marry a charming girl like Gwendolen, and she is the only girl I ever saw in my life that I would marry, I certainly won't want to know Bunbury.

Algernon. Then your wife will. You don't seem to realize, that in married life three is company and two is none.

Jack [*sententiously*]. That, my dear young friend, is the theory that the corrupt French Drama has been propounding for the last fifty years.

Algernon. Yes; and that the happy English home has proved in half the time.

Jack. For heaven's sake, don't try to be cynical. It's perfectly easy to be cynical.

Algernon. My dear fellow, it isn't easy to be anything now-a-days. There's such a lot of beastly competition about.

[*The sound of an electric bell is heard*]
Ah! that must be Aunt Augusta. Only relatives, or creditors, ever ring in that Wagnerian manner. Now, if I get her out of the way for ten minutes, so that you can have an opportunity for proposing to Gwendolen, may I dine with you to-night at Willis's?

Jack. I suppose so, if you want to.

Algernon. Yes, but you must be serious about it. I hate people who are not serious about meals. It is so shallow of them.

[LANE enters]

Lane. Lady Bracknell and Miss Fairfax.

[ALGERNON goes forward to meet them.]

LADY BRACKNELL and GWENDOLEN enter]

Lady Bracknell. Good afternoon, dear Algernon, I hope you are behaving very well. Algernon. I'm feeling very well, Aunt Augusta.

Lady Bracknell. That's not quite the same thing. In fact the two things rarely go together. [She sees JACK and bows to him with icy coldness]

Algernon [to GWENDOLEN]. Dear me, you are smart!

Gwendolen. I am always smart! Aren't I, Mr. Worthing?

Jack. You're quite perfect, Miss Fairfax.

Gwendolen. Oh! I hope I am not that. It would leave no room for developments, and I intend to develop in many directions.

[GWENDOLEN and JACK sit down together in the corner]

Lady Bracknell. I'm sorry if we are a little late, Algernon, but I was obliged to call on dear Lady Harbury. I hadn't been there since her poor husband's death. I never saw a woman so altered; she looks quite twenty years younger. And now I'll have a cup of tea, and one of those nice cucumber sandwiches you promised me.

Algernon. Certainly, Aunt Augusta. [He goes over to the tea-table]

Lady Bracknell. Won't you come and sit here, Gwendolen?

Gwendolen. Thanks, mamma, I'm quite comfortable where I am.

Algernon [picking up the empty plate in horror]. Good heavens! Lane! Why are there no cucumber sandwiches? I ordered them specially.

Lane [gravely]. There were no cucumbers in the market this morning, sir. I went down twice.

Algernon. No cucumbers!

Lane. No, sir. Not even for ready money.

Algernon. That will do, Lane, thank you.

Lane. Thank you, sir. [He goes out]

Algernon. I am greatly distressed, Aunt Augusta, about there being no cucumbers, not even for ready money.

Lady Bracknell. It really makes no matter, Algernon. I had some crumpets with Lady Harbury, who seems to me to be living entirely for pleasure now.

Algernon. I hear her hair has turned quite gold from grief.

Lady Bracknell. It certainly has changed its colour. From what cause I, of course, cannot say.

[ALGERNON crosses and hands tea] Thank you. I've quite a treat for you to-night, Algernon. I am going to send you down with Mary Farquhar. She is such a nice woman, and so attentive to her husband. It's delightful to watch them.

Algernon. I am afraid, Aunt Augusta, I shall have to give up the pleasure of dining with you to-night after all.

Lady Bracknell [frowning]. I hope not, Algernon. It would put my table completely out. Your uncle would have to dine upstairs. Fortunately he is accustomed to that.

Algernon. It is a great bore, and, I need hardly say, a terrible disappointment to me, but the fact is I have just had a telegram to say that my poor friend Bunbury is very ill again. [He exchanges glances with JACK] They seem to think I should be with him.

Lady Bracknell. It is very strange. This Mr. Bunbury seems to suffer from curiously bad health.

Algernon. Yes; poor Bunbury is a dreadful invalid.

Lady Bracknell. Well, I must say, Algernon, that I think it is high time that Mr. Bunbury made up his mind whether he was going to live or to die. This shilly-shallying with the question is absurd. Nor do I in any way approve of the modern sympathy with invalids. I consider it morbid. Illness of any kind is hardly a thing to be encouraged in others. Health is the primary duty of life. I am always telling that to your poor uncle, but he never seems to take much notice . . . as far as any improvement in his ailments goes. I should be much obliged if you would ask Mr. Bunbury, from me, to be kind enough not to have a relapse on Saturday, for I rely on you to arrange my music for me. It is my last reception and one wants something that will encourage conversation, particularly at the end of the season when everyone has practically said whatever they had to say, which, in most cases, was probably not much.

Algernon. I'll speak to Bunbury, Aunt Augusta, if he is still conscious, and I think I can promise you he'll be all right by

Saturday. You see, if one plays good music, people don't listen, and if one plays bad music, people don't talk. But I'll run over the programme I've drawn out, if you will kindly come into the next room for a moment.

Lady Bracknell. Thank you, Algernon. It is very thoughtful of you. [*Rising, and following ALGERNON*] I'm sure the programme will be delightful, after a few expurgations. French songs I cannot possibly allow. People always seem to think that they are improper, and either look shocked, which is vulgar, or laugh, which is worse. But German sounds a thoroughly respectable language, and indeed, I believe is so. Gwendolen, you will accompany me.

Gwendolen. Certainly, mamma.

[*LADY BRACKNELL and ALGERNON go into the music-room. GWENDOLEN remains behind*]

Jack. Charming day it has been, Miss Fairfax.

Gwendolen. Pray don't talk to me about the weather, Mr. Worthing. Whenever people talk to me about the weather, I always feel quite certain that they mean something else. And that makes me so nervous.

Jack. I do mean something else.

Gwendolen. I thought so. In fact, I am never wrong.

Jack. And I would like to be allowed to take advantage of Lady Bracknell's temporary absence . . .

Gwendolen. I would certainly advise you to do so. Mamma has a way of coming back suddenly into a room that I have often had to speak to her about.

Jack [*nervously*]. Miss Fairfax, ever since I met you I have admired you more than any girl . . . I have ever met since . . . I met you.

Gwendolen. Yes, I am quite aware of the fact. And I often wish that in public, at any rate, you had been more demonstrative. For me you have always had an irresistible fascination. Even before I met you I was far from indifferent to you.

[*JACK looks at her in amazement*] We live, as I hope you know, Mr. Worthing, in an age of ideals. The fact is constantly mentioned in the more expensive monthly magazines, and has reached the provincial pulpits, I am told; and my ideal has always been to love some one of the

name of Ernest. There is something in that name that inspires absolute confidence. The moment Algernon first mentioned to me that he had a friend called Ernest, I knew I was destined to love you.

Jack. You really love me, Gwendolen?

Gwendolen. Passionately!

Jack. Darling! You don't know how happy you've made me.

Gwendolen. My own Ernest!

Jack. But you don't really mean to say that you couldn't love me if my name wasn't Ernest?

Gwendolen. But your name is Ernest.

Jack. Yes, I know it is. But supposing it was something else? Do you mean to say you couldn't love me then?

Gwendolen [*glibly*]. Ah! that is clearly a metaphysical speculation, and like most metaphysical speculations has very little reference at all to the actual facts of real life, as we know them.

Jack. Personally, darling, to speak quite candidly, I don't much care about the name of Ernest . . . I don't think that name suits me at all.

Gwendolen. It suits you perfectly. It is a divine name. It has a music of its own. It produces vibrations.

Jack. Well, really, Gwendolen, I must say that I think there are lots of other much nicer names. I think, Jack, for instance, a charming name.

Gwendolen. Jack? . . . No, there is very little music in the name Jack, if any at all, indeed. It does not thrill. It produces absolutely no vibrations. . . . I have known several Jacks, and they all, without exception, were more than usually plain. Besides, Jack is a notorious domesticity for John! And I pity any woman who is married to a man called John. She would probably never be allowed to know the entrancing pleasure of a single moment's solitude. The only really safe name is Ernest.

Jack. Gwendolen, I must get christened at once—I mean we must get married at once. There is no time to be lost.

Gwendolen. Married, Mr. Worthing?

Jack [*astounded*]. Well . . . surely. You know that I love you, and you led me to believe, Miss Fairfax, that you were not absolutely indifferent to me.

Gwendolen. I adore you. But you haven't proposed to me yet. Nothing has been

said at all about marriage. The subject has not even been touched on.

Jack. Well . . . may I propose to you now?

Gwendolen. I think it would be an admirable opportunity. And to spare you any possible disappointment, Mr. Worthing, I think it only fair to tell you quite frankly beforehand that I am fully determined to accept you.

Jack. Gwendolen!

Gwendolen. Yes, Mr. Worthing, what have you got to say to me?

Jack. You know what I have got to say to you.

Gwendolen. Yes, but you don't say it.

Jack. Gwendolen, will you marry me? [He goes on his knees]

Gwendolen. Of course I will, darling. How long you have been about it! I am afraid you have had very little experience in how to propose.

Jack. My own one, I have never loved anyone in the world but you.

Gwendolen. Yes, but men often propose for practice. I know my brother Gerald does. All my girl-friends tell me so. What wonderfully blue eyes you have, Ernest! They are quite, quite blue. I hope you will always look at me just like that, especially when there are other people present.

[LADY BRACKNELL enters]

Lady Bracknell. Mr. Worthing! Rise, sir, from this semi-recumbent posture. It is most indecorous.

Gwendolen. Mamma!

[Jack tries to rise; GWENDOLEN restrains him]

I must beg you to retire. This is no place for you. Besides, Mr. Worthing has not quite finished yet.

Lady Bracknell. Finished what, may I ask?

Gwendolen. I am engaged to Mr. Worthing, mamma.

[GWENDOLEN and JACK rise together]

Lady Bracknell. Pardon me, you are not engaged to anyone. When you do become engaged to some one, I, or your father, should his health permit him, will inform you of the fact. An engagement should come on a young girl as a surprise, pleasant or unpleasant, as the case may be. It is hardly a matter that she could be allowed to arrange for herself. . . . And now I have a few questions to put to you, Mr.

Worthing. While I am making these inquiries, you, Gwendolen, will wait for me below in the carriage.

Gwendolen [reproachfully]. Mamma!

Lady Bracknell. In the carriage, Gwendolen!

[GWENDOLEN goes to the door. She and JACK blow kisses to each other behind LADY BRACKNELL'S back. LADY BRACKNELL looks vaguely about as if she could not understand what the noise was. She finally turns round]

Gwendolen, the carriage!

Gwendolen. Yes, mamma. [She goes out, looking back at JACK]

Lady Bracknell [sitting down]. You can take a seat, Mr. Worthing. [She looks in her pocket for note-book and pencil]

Jack. Thank you, Lady Bracknell, I prefer standing.

Lady Bracknell [pencil and note-book in hand]. I feel bound to tell you that you are not down on my list of eligible young men, although I have the same list as the dear Duchess of Bolton has. We work together, in fact. However, I am quite ready to enter your name, should your answers be what a really affectionate mother requires. Do you smoke?

Jack. Well, yes, I must admit I smoke.

Lady Bracknell. I am glad to hear it. A man should always have an occupation of some kind. There are far too many idle men in London as it is. How old are you?

Jack. Twenty-nine.

Lady Bracknell. A very good age to be married at. I have always been of opinion that a man who desires to get married should know either everything or nothing. Which do you know?

Jack [after some hesitation]. I know nothing, Lady Bracknell.

Lady Bracknell. I am pleased to hear it. I do not approve of anything that tampers with natural ignorance. Ignorance is like a delicate exotic fruit; touch it and the bloom is gone. The whole theory of modern education is radically unsound. Fortunately in England, at any rate, education produces no effect whatsoever. If it did, it would prove a serious danger to the upper classes, and probably lead to acts of violence in Grosvenor Square. What is your income?

Jack. Between seven and eight thousand a year.

Lady Bracknell [*makes a note in her book*]. In land, or in investments?

Jack. In investments, chiefly.

Lady Bracknell. That is satisfactory. What between the duties expected of one during one's life-time, and the duties exacted from one after one's death, land has ceased to be either a profit or a pleasure. It gives one position, and prevents one from keeping it up. That's all that can be said about land.

Jack. I have a country house with some land, of course, attached to it, about fifteen hundred acres, I believe; but I don't depend on that for my real income. In fact, as far as I can make out, the poachers are the only people who make anything out of it.

Lady Bracknell. A country house! How many bedrooms? Well, that point can be cleared up afterwards. You have a town house, I hope? A girl with a simple, unspoiled nature, like Gwendolen, could hardly be expected to reside in the country.

Jack. Well, I own a house in Belgrave Square, but it is let by the year to Lady Bloxham. Of course, I can get it back whenever I like, at six months' notice.

Lady Bracknell. Lady Bloxham? I don't know her.

Jack. Oh, she goes about very little. She is a lady considerably advanced in years.

Lady Bracknell. Ah, now-a-days that is no guarantee of respectability of character. What number in Belgrave Square?

Jack. 149.

Lady Bracknell [*shaking her head*]. The unfashionable side. I thought there was something. However, that could easily be altered.

Jack. Do you mean the fashion, or the side?

Lady Bracknell [*sternly*]. Both, if necessary, I presume. What are your politics?

Jack. Well, I am afraid I really have none. I am a Liberal Unionist.

Lady Bracknell. Oh, they count as Tories. They dine with us. Or come in the evening, at any rate. Now to minor matters. Are your parents living?

Jack. I have lost both my parents.

Lady Bracknell. Both? . . . That seems like carelessness. Who was your father? He was evidently a man of some wealth. Was he born in what the Radical papers call

the purple of commerce, or did he rise from the ranks of the aristocracy?

Jack. I am afraid I really don't know. The fact is, Lady Bracknell, I said I had lost my parents. It would be nearer the truth to say that my parents seem to have lost me . . . I don't actually know who I am by birth. I was . . . well, I was found.

Lady Bracknell. Found!

Jack. The late Mr. Thomas Cardew, an old gentleman of a very charitable and kindly disposition, found me, and gave me the name of Worthing, because he happened to have a first-class ticket for Worthing in his pocket at the time. Worthing is a place in Sussex. It is a seaside resort.

Lady Bracknell. Where did the charitable gentleman who had a first-class ticket for this seaside resort find you?

Jack [*gravely*]. In a hand-bag.

Lady Bracknell. A hand-bag?

Jack [*very seriously*]. Yes, Lady Bracknell. I was in a hand-bag—a somewhat large, black leather hand-bag, with handles to it—an ordinary hand-bag in fact.

Lady Bracknell. In what locality did this Mr. James, or Thomas, Cardew come across this ordinary hand-bag?

Jack. In the cloak-room at Victoria Station. It was given to him in mistake for his own.

Lady Bracknell. The cloak-room at Victoria Station?

Jack. Yes. The Brighton line.

Lady Bracknell. The line is immaterial. Mr. Worthing, I confess I feel somewhat bewildered by what you have just told me. To be born, or at any rate bred, in a hand-bag, whether it had handles or not, seems to me to display a contempt for the ordinary decencies of family life that remind one of the worst excesses of the French Revolution. And I presume you know what that unfortunate movement led to? As for the particular locality in which the hand-bag was found, a cloak-room at a railway station might serve to conceal a social indiscretion—has probably, indeed, been used for that purpose before now—but it could hardly be regarded as an assured basis for a recognized position in good society.

Jack. May I ask you, then, what you would advise me to do? I need hardly say I would do anything in the world to ensure Gwendolen's happiness.

Lady Bracknell. I would strongly advise you, Mr. Worthing, to try and acquire some relations as soon as possible, and to make a definite effort to produce at any rate one parent, of either sex, before the season is quite over.

Jack. Well, I don't see how I could possibly manage to do that. I can produce the hand-bag at any moment. It is in my dressing-room at home. I really think that should satisfy you, Lady Bracknell.

Lady Bracknell. Me, sir! What has it to do with me? You can hardly imagine that I and Lord Bracknell would dream of allowing our only daughter—a girl brought up with the utmost care—to marry into a cloak-room, and form an alliance with a parcel? Good morning, Mr. Worthing! [*She sweeps out in majestic indignation*]

Jack. Good morning!

[*ALGERNON, from the other room, strikes up the Wedding March. JACK looks perfectly furious, and goes to the door*]

For goodness' sake don't play that ghastly tune, Algy! How idiotic you are!

[*The music stops, and ALGERNON enters cheerily*]

Algermon. Didn't it go off all right, old boy? You don't mean to say Gwendolen refused you? I know it is a way she has. She is always refusing people. I think it is most ill-natured of her.

Jack. Oh, Gwendolen is as right as a trivet. As far as she is concerned, we are engaged. Her mother is perfectly unbearable. Never met such a Gorgon . . . I don't really know what a Gorgon is like, but I am quite sure that Lady Bracknell is one. In any case, she is a monster, without being a myth, which is rather unfair. . . . I beg your pardon, Algy, I suppose I shouldn't talk about your own aunt in that way before you.

Algermon. My dear boy, I love hearing my relations abused. It is the only thing that makes me put up with them at all. Relations are simply a tedious pack of people, who haven't got the remotest knowledge of how to live, nor the smallest instinct about when to die.

Jack. Oh, that is nonsense!

Algermon. It isn't!

Jack. Well, I won't argue about the matter. You always want to argue about things.

Algermon. That is exactly what things were originally made for.

Jack. Upon my word, if I thought that, I'd shoot myself . . . [*After a pause*] You don't think there is any chance of Gwendolen becoming like her mother in about a hundred and fifty years, do you, Algy?

Algermon. All women become like their mothers. That is their tragedy. No man does. That's his.

Jack. Is that clever?

Algermon. It is perfectly phrased!—and quite as true as any observation in civilized life should be.

Jack. I am sick to death of cleverness. Everybody is clever now-a-days. You can't go anywhere without meeting clever people. The thing has become an absolute public nuisance. I wish to goodness we had a few fools left.

Algermon. We have.

Jack. I should extremely like to meet them. What do they talk about?

Algermon. The fools? Oh! about the clever people, of course.

Jack. What fools!

Algermon. By the way, did you tell Gwendolen the truth about your being Ernest in town, and Jack in the country?

Jack [*in a very patronising manner*]. My dear fellow, the truth isn't quite the sort of thing one tells to a nice, sweet, refined girl. What extraordinary ideas you have about the way to behave to a woman!

Algermon. The only way to behave to a woman is to make love to her, if she is pretty, and to someone else if she is plain.

Jack. Oh, that is nonsense.

Algermon. What about your brother? What about the profligate Ernest?

Jack. Oh, before the end of the week I shall have got rid of him. I'll say he died in Paris of apoplexy. Lots of people die of apoplexy, quite suddenly, don't they?

Algermon. Yes, but it's hereditary, my dear fellow. It's a sort of thing that runs in families. You had much better say a severe chill.

Jack. You are sure a severe chill isn't hereditary, or anything of that kind?

Algermon. Of course it isn't!

Jack. Very well, then. My poor brother Ernest is carried off suddenly in Paris, by a severe chill. That gets rid of him.

Algermon. But I thought you said that . . . Miss Cardew was a little too much

interested in your poor brother Ernest? Won't she feel his loss a good deal?

Jack. Oh, that is all right. Cecily is not a silly, romantic girl, I am glad to say. She has got a capital appetite, goes for long walks, and pays no attention at all to her lessons.

Algernon. I would rather like to see Cecily.

Jack. I will take very good care you never do. She is excessively pretty, and she is only just eighteen.

Algernon. Have you told Gwendolen yet that you have an excessively pretty ward who is only just eighteen?

Jack. Oh! one doesn't blurt these things out to people. Cecily and Gwendolen are perfectly certain to be extremely great friends. I'll bet you anything you like that half an hour after they have met, they will be calling each other sister.

Algernon. Women only do that when they have called each other a lot of other things first. Now, my dear boy, if we want to get a good table at Willis's, we really must go and dress. Do you know it is nearly seven?

Jack [*irritably*]. Oh! it always is nearly seven.

Algernon. Well, I'm hungry.

Jack. I never knew you when you weren't. . . .

Algernon. What shall we do after dinner? Go to a theatre?

Jack. Oh, no! I loathe listening.

Algernon. Well, let us go to the Club?

Jack. Oh, no! I hate talking.

Algernon. Well, we might trot round to the Empire at ten?

Jack. Oh, no! I can't bear looking at things. It is so silly.

Algernon. Well, what shall we do?

Jack. Nothing!

Algernon. It is awfully hard work doing nothing. However, I don't mind hard work where there is no definite object of any kind. [LANE enters]

Lane. Miss Fairfax.

[GWENDOLEN enters. LANE goes out]

Algernon. Gwendolen, upon my word!

Gwendolen. Algy, kindly turn your back. I have something very particular to say to Mr. Worthing.

Algernon. Really, Gwendolen, I don't think I can allow this at all.

Gwendolen. Algy, you always adopt a

strictly immoral attitude towards life. You are not quite old enough to do that.

[ALGERNON retires to the fireplace]

Jack. My own darling!

Gwendolen. Ernest, we may never be married. From the expression on mamma's face, I fear we never shall. Few parents now-a-days pay any regard to what their children say to them. The old-fashioned respect for the young is fast dying out. Whatever influence I ever had over mamma, I lost at the age of three. But although she may prevent us from becoming man and wife, and I may marry someone else, and marry often, nothing that she can possibly do can alter my eternal devotion to you.

Jack. Dear Gwendolen!

Gwendolen. The story of your romantic origin, as related to me by mamma, with unpleasing comments, has naturally stirred the deeper fibres of my nature. Your Christian name has an irresistible fascination. The simplicity of your character makes you exquisitely incomprehensible to me. Your town address at the Albany I have. What is your address in the country?

Jack. The Manor House, Woolton, Hertfordshire.

[ALGERNON, who has been carefully listening, smiles to himself, and writes the address on his shirt-cuff. Then he picks up the Railway Guide]

Gwendolen. There is a good postal service, I suppose? It may be necessary to do something desperate. That, of course, will require serious consideration. I will communicate with you daily.

Jack. My own one!

Gwendolen. How long do you remain in town?

Jack. Till Monday.

Gwendolen. Good! Algy, you may turn round now.

Algernon. Thanks, I've turned round already.

Gwendolen. You may also ring the bell.

Jack. You will let me see you to your carriage, my own darling?

Gwendolen. Certainly.

[LANE enters]
Jack [to LANE]. I will see Miss Fairfax out.

Lane. Yes, sir.

[JACK and GWENDOLEN go out. LANE presents several letters on a salver to ALGERNON. It is to be surmised that they are bills, as ALGERNON, after

looking at the envelopes, tears them up]

Algernon. A glass of sherry, Lane.

Lane. Yes, sir.

Algernon. To-morrow, Lane, I'm going Bunburying.

Lane. Yes, sir.

Algernon. I shall probably not be back till Monday. You can put up my dress clothes, my smoking jacket, and all the Bunbury suits . . .

Lane [*handing the sherry*]. Yes, sir.

Algernon. I hope to-morrow will be a fine day, Lane.

Lane. It never is, sir.

Algernon. Lane, you're a perfect pessimist.

Lane. I do my best to give satisfaction, sir. [*JACK enters. LANE goes out*]

Jack. There's a sensible, intellectual girl! the only girl I ever cared for in my life. [*ALGERNON is laughing immoderately*] What on earth are you so amused at?

Algernon. Oh, I'm a little anxious about poor Bunbury, that's all.

Jack. If you don't take care, your friend Bunbury will get you into a serious scrape some day.

Algernon. I love scrapes. They are the only things that are never serious.

Jack. Oh, that's nonsense, Algy. You never talk anything but nonsense.

Algernon. Nobody ever does.

[*JACK looks indignantly at Algernon, and leaves the room. ALGERNON lights a cigarette, reads his shirt-cuff, and smiles*]

ACT TWO

The garden at the Manor House. A flight of gray stone steps leads up to the house. The garden, an old-fashioned one, is full of roses. The time of year is July. Basket chairs, and a table covered with books, are set under a large yew tree.

MISS PRISM is seated at the table. CECILY is at the back, watering flowers.

Miss Prism [*calling*]. Cecily, Cecily! Surely such a utilitarian occupation as the watering of flowers is rather Moulton's duty than yours? Especially at a moment when intellectual pleasures await you. Your German grammar is on the table. Pray open it at page fifteen. We will repeat yesterday's lesson.

Cecily [*coming over very slowly*]. But I don't like German. It isn't at all a becoming language. I know perfectly well that I look quite plain after my German lesson.

Miss Prism. Child, you know how anxious your guardian is that you should improve yourself in every way. He laid particular stress on your German, as he was leaving for town yesterday. Indeed, he always lays stress on your German when he is leaving for town.

Cecily. Dear Uncle Jack is so very serious! Sometimes he is so serious that I think he cannot be quite well.

Miss Prism [*drawing herself up*]. Your guardian enjoys the best of health, and his gravity of demeanour is especially to be commended in one so comparatively young as he is. I know no one who has a higher sense of duty and responsibility.

Cecily. I suppose that is why he often looks a little bored when we three are together.

Miss Prism. Cecily! I am surprised at you. Mr. Worthing has many troubles in his life. Idle merriment and triviality would be out of place in his conversation. You must remember his constant anxiety about that unfortunate young man, his brother.

Cecily. I wish Uncle Jack would allow that unfortunate young man, his brother, to come down here sometimes. We might have a good influence over him, Miss Prism. I am sure you certainly would. You know German, and geology, and things of that kind influence a man very much. [*She begins to write in her diary*]

Miss Prism [*shaking her head*]. I do not think that even I could produce any effect on a character that, according to his own brother's admission, is irretrievably weak and vacillating. Indeed, I am not sure that I would desire to reclaim him. I am not in favour of this modern mania for turning bad people into good people at a moment's notice. As a man sows so let him reap. You must put away your diary, Cecily. I really don't see why you should keep a diary at all.

Cecily. I keep a diary in order to enter the wonderful secrets of my life. If I didn't write them down, I should probably forget all about them.

Miss Prism. Memory, my dear Cecily, is the diary that we all carry about with us.

Cecily. Yes, but it usually chronicles the

things that have never happened, and couldn't possibly have happened. I believe that Memory is responsible for nearly all the three-volume novels that Mudie sends us.

Miss Prism. Do not speak slightly of the three-volume novel, Cecily. I wrote one myself in earlier days.

Cecily. Did you really, Miss Prism? How wonderfully clever you are! I hope it did not end happily? I don't like novels that end happily. They depress me so much.

Miss Prism. The good ended happily, and the bad unhappily. That is what Fiction means.

Cecily. I suppose so. But it seems very unfair. And was your novel ever published?

Miss Prism. Alas! no. The manuscript unfortunately was abandoned. I use the word in the sense of lost or mislaid. To your work, child; these speculations are profitless.

Cecily [smiling]. But I see dear Dr. Chasuble coming up through the garden.

Miss Prism [rising and advancing]. Dr. Chasuble! This is indeed a pleasure.

[CANON CHASUBLE enters]

Chasuble. And how are we this morning? Miss Prism, you are, I trust, well?

Cecily. Miss Prism has just been complaining of a slight headache. I think it would do her so much good to have a short stroll with you in the park, Dr. Chasuble.

Miss Prism. Cecily, I have not mentioned anything about a headache.

Cecily. No, dear Miss Prism, I know that, but I felt instinctively that you had a headache. Indeed I was thinking about that, and not about my German lesson, when the Rector came in.

Chasuble. I hope, Cecily, you are not inattentive.

Cecily. Oh, I am afraid I am.

Chasuble. That is strange. Were I fortunate enough to be Miss Prism's pupil, I would hang upon her lips.

[MISS PRISM glares]

I spoke metaphorically—my metaphor was drawn from bees. Ahem! Mr. Worthing, I suppose, has not returned from town yet?

Miss Prism. We do not expect him till Monday afternoon.

Chasuble. Ah yes, he usually likes to spend his Sunday in London. He is not one of those whose sole aim is enjoyment, as, by all accounts, that unfortunate young

man, his brother, seems to be. But I must not disturb Egeria and her pupil any longer.

Miss Prism. Egeria? My name is Lætitia, Doctor.

Chasuble [bowing]. A classical allusion merely, drawn from the Pagan authors. I shall see you both no doubt at Evensong.

Miss Prism. I think, dear Doctor, I will have a stroll with you. I find I have a headache after all, and a walk might do it good.

Chasuble. With pleasure, Miss Prism, with pleasure. We might go as far as the schools and back.

Miss Prism. That would be delightful. Cecily, you will read your Political Economy in my absence. The chapter on the Fall of the Rupee you may omit. It is somewhat too sensational. Even these metallic problems have their melodramatic side.

[MISS PRISM goes down the garden with DR. CHASUBLE. CECILY picks up the books and throws them back on the table]

Cecily. Horrid Political Economy! Horrid Geography! Horrid, horrid German!

[MERRIMAN enters with a card on a salver]

Merriman. Mr. Ernest Worthing has just driven over from the station. He has brought his luggage with him.

Cecily [taking the card and reading it]. "Mr. Ernest Worthing, B 4, The Albany, W." Uncle Jack's brother! Did you tell him Mr. Worthing was in town?

Merriman. Yes, Miss. He seemed very much disappointed. I mentioned that you and Miss Prism were in the garden. He said he was anxious to speak to you privately for a moment.

Cecily. Ask Mr. Ernest Worthing to come here. I suppose you had better talk to the housekeeper about a room for him.

Merriman. Yes, Miss.

[MERRIMAN goes]

Cecily. I have never met any really wicked person before. I feel rather frightened. I am so afraid he will look just like everyone else.

[ALGERNON enters, very gay and debonair]

He does!

Algernon [raising his hat]. You are my little cousin Cecily, I'm sure.

Cecily. You are under some strange mis-

take. I am not little. In fact, I am more than usually tall for my age.

[ALGERNON is rather taken aback]

But I am your cousin Cecily. You, I see from your card, are Uncle Jack's brother, my cousin Ernest, my wicked cousin Ernest.

Algernon. Oh! I am not really wicked at all, cousin Cecily. You mustn't think that I am wicked.

Cecily. If you are not, then you have certainly been deceiving us all in a very inexcusable manner. I hope you have not been leading a double life, pretending to be wicked and being really good all the time. That would be hypocrisy.

Algernon [looking at her in amazement]. Oh! of course I have been rather reckless.

Cecily. I am glad to hear it.

Algernon. In fact, now you mention the subject, I have been very bad in my own small way.

Cecily. I don't think you should be so proud of that, though I am sure it must have been very pleasant.

Algernon. It is much pleasanter being here with you.

Cecily. I can't understand how you are here at all. Uncle Jack won't be back till Monday afternoon.

Algernon. That is a great disappointment. I am obliged to go up by the first train on Monday morning. I have a business appointment that I am anxious . . . to miss.

Cecily. Couldn't you miss it anywhere but in London?

Algernon. No; the appointment is in London.

Cecily. Well, I know, of course, how important it is not to keep a business engagement, if one wants to retain any sense of the beauty of life, but still I think you had better wait till Uncle Jack arrives. I know he wants to speak to you about your emigrating.

Algernon. About my what?

Cecily. Your emigrating. He has gone up to buy your outfit.

Algernon. I certainly wouldn't let Jack buy my outfit. He has no taste in neckties at all.

Cecily. I don't think you will require neckties. Uncle Jack is sending you to Australia.

Algernon. Australia! I'd sooner die.

Cecily. Well, he said at dinner on Wednesday night, that you would have to

choose between this world, the next world, and Australia.

Algernon. Oh, well! The accounts I have received of Australia and the next world, are not particularly encouraging. This world is good enough for me, cousin Cecily.

Cecily. Yes, but are you good enough for it?

Algernon. I'm afraid I'm not that. That is why I want you to reform me. You might make that your mission, if you don't mind, cousin Cecily.

Cecily. I'm afraid I've not time, this afternoon.

Algernon. Well, would you mind my reforming myself this afternoon?

Cecily. That is rather Quixotic of you. But I think you should try.

Algernon. I will. I feel better already.

Cecily. You are looking a little worse.

Algernon. That is because I am hungry.

Cecily. How thoughtless of me! I should have remembered that when one is going to lead an entirely new life, one requires regular and wholesome meals. Won't you come in?

Algernon. Thank you. Might I have a button-hole first? I never have any appetite unless I have a button-hole first.

Cecily. A Maréchal Niel? [She picks up the scissors]

Algernon. No, I'd sooner have a pink rose.

Cecily. Why? [She cuts a flower]

Algernon. Because you are like a pink rose, cousin Cecily.

Cecily. I don't think it can be right for you to talk to me like that. Miss Prism never says such things to me.

Algernon. Then Miss Prism is a short-sighted old lady.

[CECILY puts the rose in his button-hole]

You are the prettiest girl I ever saw.

Cecily. Miss Prism says that all good looks are a snare.

Algernon. They are a snare that every sensible man would like to be caught in.

Cecily. Oh! I don't think I would care to catch a sensible man. I shouldn't know what to talk to him about.

[CECILY and ALGERNON pass into the house. MISS PRISM and DR. CHASUBLE return]

Miss Prism. You are too much alone, dear Dr. Chasuble. You should get mar-

ried. A misanthrope I can understand—a womanthrope, never!

Chasuble [*with a scholar's shudder*]. Believe me, I do not deserve so neologistic a phrase. The precept as well as the practice of the Primitive Church was distinctly against matrimony.

Miss Prism [*sententiously*]. That is obviously the reason why the Primitive Church has not lasted up to the present day. And you do not seem to realize, dear Doctor, that by persistently remaining single, a man converts himself into a permanent public temptation. Men should be careful; this very celibacy leads weaker vessels astray.

Chasuble. But is a man not equally attractive when married?

Miss Prism. No married man is ever attractive except to his wife.

Chasuble. And often, I've been told, not even to her.

Miss Prism. That depends on the intellectual sympathies of the woman. Maturity can always be depended on. Ripeness can be trusted. Young women are green.

[*DR. CHASUBLE starts*]

I spoke horticulturally. My metaphor was drawn from fruits. But where is Cecily?

Chasuble. Perhaps she followed us to the schools.

[*JACK enters slowly from the back of the garden. He is dressed in the deepest mourning, with crape hatband and black gloves*]

Miss Prism. Mr. Worthing!

Chasuble. Mr. Worthing!

Miss Prism. This is indeed a surprise. We did not look for you till Monday afternoon.

[*JACK shakes Miss PRISM's hand in a tragic manner*]

Jack. I have returned sooner than I expected. Dr. Chasuble, I hope you are well?

Chasuble. Dear Mr. Worthing, I trust this garb of woe does not betoken some terrible calamity?

Jack. My brother.

Miss Prism. More shameful debts and extravagance?

Chasuble. Still leading his life of pleasure?

Jack [*shaking his head*]. Dead!

Chasuble. Your brother Ernest dead?

Jack. Quite dead.

Miss Prism. What a lesson for him! I trust he will profit by it.

Chasuble. Mr. Worthing, I offer you my sincere condolence. You have at least the consolation of knowing that you were always the most generous and forgiving of brothers.

Jack. Poor Ernest! He had many faults, but it is a sad, sad blow.

Chasuble. Very sad indeed. Were you with him at the end?

Jack. No. He died abroad; in Paris, in fact. I had a telegram last night from the manager of the Grand Hotel.

Chasuble. Was the cause of death mentioned?

Jack. A severe chill, it seems.

Miss Prism. As a man sows, so shall he reap.

Chasuble [*raising his hand*]. Charity, dear Miss Prism, charity! None of us are perfect. I myself am peculiarly susceptible to draughts. Will the interment take place here?

Jack. No. He seems to have expressed a desire to be buried in Paris.

Chasuble. In Paris! [*He shakes his head*] I fear that hardly points to any very serious state of mind at the last. You would no doubt wish me to make some slight allusion to this tragic domestic affliction next Sunday.

[*JACK presses DR. CHASUBLE's hand convulsively*]

My sermon on the meaning of the manna in the wilderness can be adapted to almost any occasion, joyful, or, as in the present case, distressing.

[*All sigh*]

I have preached it at harvest celebrations, christenings, confirmations, on days of humiliation, and festal days. The last time I delivered it was in the Cathedral, as a charity sermon on behalf of the Society for the Prevention of Discontentment among the Upper Orders. The Bishop, who was present, was much struck by some of the analogies I drew.

Jack. Ah, that reminds me, you mentioned christenings I think, Dr. Chasuble? I suppose you know how to christen all right?

[*DR. CHASUBLE looks astounded*]

I mean, of course, you are continually christening, aren't you?

Miss Prism. It is, I regret to say, one of the Rector's most constant duties in this parish. I have often spoken to the poorer

classes on the subject. But they don't seem to know what thrift is.

Chasuble. But is there any particular infant in whom you are interested, Mr. Worthing? Your brother was, I believe, unmarried, was he not?

Jack. Oh, yes.

Miss Prism [bitterly]. People who live entirely for pleasure usually are.

Jack. But it is not for any child, dear Doctor. I am very fond of children. No! the fact is, I would like to be christened myself, this afternoon, if you have nothing better to do.

Chasuble. But surely, Mr. Worthing, you have been christened already?

Jack. I don't remember anything about it.

Chasuble. But have you any grave doubts on the subject?

Jack. I certainly intend to have. Of course, I don't know if the thing would bother you in any way, or if you think I am a little too old now.

Chasuble. Not at all. The sprinkling, and, indeed, the immersion, of adults is a perfectly canonical practice.

Jack. Immersion!

Chasuble. You need have no apprehensions. Sprinkling is all that is necessary, or indeed, I think, advisable. Our weather is so changeable. At what hour would you wish the ceremony performed?

Jack. Oh, I might trot around about five if that would suit you.

Chasuble. Perfectly, perfectly! In fact I have two similar ceremonies to perform at that time. A case of twins that occurred recently in one of the outlying cottages on your own estate. Poor Jenkins the carter, a most hard-working man.

Jack. Oh! I don't see much fun in being christened along with other babies. It would be childish. Would half-past five do?

Chasuble. Admirably! Admirably! [*He takes out his watch*] And now, dear Mr. Worthing, I will not intrude any longer into a house of sorrow. I would merely beg you not to be too much bowed down by grief. What seem to us bitter trials at the moment are often blessings in disguise.

Miss Prism. This seems to me a blessing of an extremely obvious kind.

[*CECILY enters from the house*]

Cecily. Uncle Jack! Oh, I am pleased to

see you back. But what horrid clothes you have on! Do go and change them.

Miss Prism. Cecily!

Chasuble. My child! my child!

[*CECILY goes towards JACK; he kisses her brow in a melancholy manner*]

Cecily. What is the matter, Uncle Jack? Do look happy! You look as if you had a toothache, and I have such a surprise for you. Who do you think is in the dining-room? Your brother!

Jack. Who?

Cecily. Your brother Ernest. He arrived about half an hour ago.

Jack. What nonsense! I haven't got a brother.

Cecily. Oh, don't say that. However badly he may have behaved to you in the past, he is still your brother. You couldn't be so heartless as to disown him. I'll tell him to come out. And you will shake hands with him, won't you, Uncle Jack? [*She runs back into the house*]

Chasuble. These are very joyful tidings.

Miss Prism. After we had all been resigned to his loss, his sudden return seems to me peculiarly distressing.

Jack. My brother is in the dining-room? I don't know what it all means. I think it is perfectly absurd.

[*ALGERNON and CECILY enter hand in hand. They come slowly up to JACK*]

Jack. Good heavens! [*He motions ALGERNON away*]

Algernon. Brother John, I have come down from town to tell you that I am very sorry for all the trouble I have given you, and that I intend to lead a better life in the future.

[*JACK glares at ALGERNON and does not take his hand*]

Cecily. Uncle Jack, you are not going to refuse your own brother's hand?

Jack. Nothing will induce me to take his hand. I think his coming down here disgraceful. He knows perfectly well why.

Cecily. Uncle Jack, do be nice. There is some good in everyone. Ernest has just been telling me about his poor invalid friend, Mr. Bunbury, whom he goes to visit so often. And surely there must be much good in one who is kind to an invalid, and leaves the pleasures of London to sit by a bed of pain.

Jack. Oh, he has been talking about Bunbury, has he?

Cecily. Yes; he has told me all about poor Mr. Bunbury, and his terrible state of health.

Jack. Bunbury! Well, I won't have him talk to you about Bunbury or about anything else. It is enough to drive one perfectly frantic.

Algernon. Of course I admit that the faults were all on my side. But I must say that I think that Brother John's coldness to me is peculiarly painful. I expected a more enthusiastic welcome, especially considering it is the first time I have come here.

Cecily. Uncle Jack, if you don't shake hands with Ernest, I will never forgive you.

Jack. Never forgive me?

Cecily. Never, never, never!

Jack. Well, this is the last time I shall ever do it. [*He shakes hands with ALGERNON and glares*]

Chasuble. It's pleasant, is it not, to see so perfect a reconciliation? I think we might leave the two brothers together.

Miss Prism. Cecily, you will come with us.

Cecily. Certainly, Miss Prism. My little task of reconciliation is over.

Chasuble. You have done a beautiful action to-day, dear child.

Miss Prism. We must not be premature in our judgments.

Cecily. I feel very happy.

[*CECILY, MISS PRISM, and DR. CHASUBLE go*]

Jack. You young scoundrel, Algy, you must get out of this place as soon as possible. I don't allow any Bunburying here.

[*MERRIMAN enters*]

Merriman. I have put Mr. Ernest's things in the room next to yours, sir. I suppose that is all right?

Jack. What?

Merriman. Mr. Ernest's luggage, sir. I have unpacked it and put it in the room next to your own.

Jack. His luggage?

Merriman. Yes, sir. Three portmanteaus, a dressing-case, two hat-boxes, and a large luncheon-basket.

Algernon. I am afraid I can't stay more than a week this time.

Jack. Merriman, order the dog-cart at once. Mr. Ernest has been suddenly called back to town.

Merriman. Yes, sir. [*He goes back into the house*]

Algernon. What a fearful liar you are, Jack. I have not been called back to town at all.

Jack. Yes, you have.

Algernon. I haven't heard anyone call me.

Jack. Your duty as a gentleman calls you back.

Algernon. My duty as a gentleman has never interfered with my pleasures in the smallest degree.

Jack. I can quite understand that.

Algernon. Well, Cecily is a darling.

Jack. You are not to talk of Miss Cardew like that. I don't like it.

Algernon. Well, I don't like your clothes. You look perfectly ridiculous in them. Why on earth don't you go up and change? It is perfectly childish to be in deep mourning for a man who is actually staying for a whole week with you in your house as a guest. I call it grotesque.

Jack. You are certainly not staying with me for a whole week as a guest or anything else. You have got to leave . . . by the four-five train.

Algernon. I certainly won't leave you so long as you are in mourning. It would be most unfriendly. If I were in mourning, you would stay with me, I suppose. I should think it very unkind if you didn't.

Jack. Well, will you go if I change my clothes?

Algernon. Yes, if you are not too long. I never saw anybody take so long to dress, and with such little result.

Jack. Well, at any rate, that is better than being always over-dressed as you are.

Algernon. If I am occasionally a little over-dressed, I make up for it by being always immensely over-educated.

Jack. Your vanity is ridiculous, your conduct an outrage, and your presence in my garden utterly absurd. However, you have got to catch the four-five, and I hope you will have a pleasant journey back to town. This Bunburying, as you call it, has not been a great success for you. [*He goes into the house*]

Algernon. I think it has been a great success. I'm in love with Cecily, and that is everything.

[*CECILY enters at the back of the garden. She picks up the can and begins to water the flowers*]

But I must see her before I go, and make arrangements for another Bunbury. Ah, there she is.

Cecily. Oh, I merely came back to water the roses. I thought you were with Uncle Jack.

Algernon. He's gone to order the dog-cart for me.

Cecily. Oh, is he going to take you for a nice drive?

Algernon. He's going to send me away.

Cecily. Then have we got to part?

Algernon. I am afraid so. It's a very painful parting.

Cecily. It is always painful to part from people whom one has known for a very brief space of time. The absence of old friends one can endure with equanimity. But even a momentary separation from anyone to whom one has just been introduced is almost unbearable.

Algernon. Thank you.

[MERRIMAN enters]

Merriman. The dog-cart is at the door, sir.

[ALGERNON looks appealingly at Cecily]

Cecily. It can wait, Merriman . . . for . . . five minutes.

Merriman. Yes, miss. [*He goes*]

Algernon. I hope, Cecily, I shall not offend you if I state quite frankly and openly that you seem to me to be in every way the visible personification of absolute perfection.

Cecily. I think your frankness does you great credit, Ernest. If you will allow me, I will copy your remarks into my diary. [*She goes over to the table and begins writing in her diary*]

Algernon. Do you really keep a diary? I'd give anything to look at it. May I?

Cecily. Oh, no. [*She puts her hand over it*] You see, it is simply a very young girl's record of her own thoughts and impressions, and consequently meant for publication. When it appears in volume form, I hope you will order a copy. But pray, Ernest, don't stop. I delight in taking down from dictation. I have reached "absolute perfection." You can go on. I am quite ready for more.

Algernon [*somewhat taken aback*]. Ahem! Ahem!

Cecily. Oh, don't cough, Ernest. When one is dictating one should speak fluently and not cough. Besides, I don't know how

to spell a cough. [*She writes as ALGERNON speaks*]

Algernon [*speaking very rapidly*]. Cecily, ever since I first looked upon your wonderful and incomparable beauty, I have dared to love you wildly, passionately, devotedly, hopelessly.

Cecily. I don't think that you should tell me that you love me wildly, passionately, devotedly, hopelessly. Hopelessly doesn't seem to make much sense, does it?

Algernon. Cecily! [MERRIMAN enters]

Merriman. The dog-cart is waiting, sir.

Algernon. Tell it to come round next week, at the same hour.

[MERRIMAN looks at CECILY, who makes no sign]

Merriman. Yes, sir. [*He retires*]

Cecily. Uncle Jack would be very much annoyed if he knew you were staying on till next week, at the same hour.

Algernon. Oh, I don't care about Jack. I don't care for anybody in the whole world but you. I love you, Cecily. You will marry me, won't you?

Cecily. You silly, you! Of course. Why, we have been engaged for the last three months.

Algernon. For the last three months?

Cecily. Yes, it will be exactly three months on Thursday.

Algernon. But how did we become engaged?

Cecily. Well, ever since dear Uncle Jack first confessed to us that he had a younger brother who was very wicked and bad, you of course have formed the chief topic of conversation between myself and Miss Prism. And of course a man who is much talked about is always very attractive. One feels there must be something in him after all. I daresay it was foolish of me, but I fell in love with you, Ernest.

Algernon. Darling! And when was the engagement actually settled?

Cecily. On the 4th of February last. Worn out by your entire ignorance of my existence, I determined to end the matter one way or the other, and after a long struggle with myself I accepted you under this dear old tree here. The next day I bought this little ring in your name, and this is the little bangle with the true lovers' knot I promised you always to wear.

Algernon. Did I give you this? It's very pretty, isn't it?

Cecily. Yes, you've wonderfully good taste, Ernest. It's the excuse I've always given for your leading such a bad life. And this is the box in which I keep all your dear letters. [*She kneels at the table, opens the box, and produces letters tied up with blue ribbon*]

Algernon. My letters! But my own sweet Cecily, I have never written you any letters.

Cecily. You need hardly remind me of that, Ernest. I remember only too well that I was forced to write your letters for you. I wrote always three times a week, and sometimes oftener.

Algernon. Oh, do let me read them, Cecily?

Cecily. Oh, I couldn't possibly. They would make you far too conceited. [*She replaces the box*] The three you wrote me after I had broken off the engagement are so beautiful, and so badly spelled, that even now I can hardly read them without crying a little.

Algernon. But was our engagement ever broken off?

Cecily. Of course it was. On the 22nd of last March. You can see the entry if you like. [*She shows the diary*] "To-day I broke off my engagement with Ernest. I feel it is better to do so. The weather still continues charming."

Algernon. But why on earth did you break it off? What had I done? I had done nothing at all. Cecily, I am very much hurt indeed to hear you broke it off. Particularly when the weather was so charming.

Cecily. It would hardly have been a really serious engagement if it hadn't been broken off at least once. But I forgave you before the week was out.

Algernon [*crossing to her, and kneeling*]. What a perfect angel you are, Cecily.

Cecily. You dear romantic boy.

[*He kisses her. She puts her fingers through his hair*]

I hope your hair curls naturally, does it?

Algernon. Yes, darling, with a little help from others.

Cecily. I am so glad.

Algernon. You'll never break off our engagement again, Cecily?

Cecily. I don't think I could break it off now that I have actually met you. Besides,

of course, there is the question of your name.

Algernon. Yes, of course [*nervously*].

Cecily. You must not laugh at me, darling, but it had always been a girlish dream of mine to love some one whose name was Ernest.^o [*ALGERNON rises, CECILY also*] There is something in that name that seems to inspire absolute confidence. I pity any poor married woman whose husband is not called Ernest.

Algernon. But, my dear child, do you mean to say you could not love me if I had some other name?

Cecily. But what name?

Algernon. Oh, any name you like—Algernon, for instance. . . .

Cecily. But I don't like the name of Algernon.

Algernon. Well, my own dear, sweet, loving little darling, I really can't see why you should object to the name of Algernon. It is not at all a bad name. In fact, it is rather an aristocratic name. Half of the chaps who get into the Bankruptcy Court are called Algernon. But seriously, Cecily, [*Moving to her*] if my name was Algy, couldn't you love me?

Cecily [*rising*]. I might respect you, Ernest, I might admire your character, but I fear that I should not be able to give you my undivided attention.

Algernon. Ahem! [*Picking up his hat*] Cecily! Your Rector here is, I suppose, thoroughly experienced in the practice of all the rites and ceremonials of the church?

Cecily. Oh, yes. Dr. Chasuble is a most learned man. He has never written a single book, so you can imagine how much he knows.

Algernon. I must see him at once on a most important christening—I mean on most important business.

Cecily. Oh!

Algernon. I shan't be away more than half an hour.

Cecily. Considering that we have been engaged since February the 14th, and that I only met you to-day for the first time, I think it is rather hard that you should leave me for so long a period as half an hour. Couldn't you make it twenty minutes?

Algernon. I'll be back in no time. [*He kisses her and rushes down the garden*]

Cecily. What an impetuous boy he is. I

like his hair so much. I must enter his proposal in my diary. [MERRIMAN enters]

Merriman. A Miss Fairfax has just called to see Mr. Worthing. On very important business, Miss Fairfax states.

Cecily. Isn't Mr. Worthing in his library?

Merriman. Mr. Worthing went over in the direction of the Rectory some time ago.

Cecily. Pray ask the lady to come out here; Mr. Worthing is sure to be back soon. And you can bring tea.

Merriman. Yes, miss. [He goes]

Cecily. Miss Fairfax! I suppose one of the many good elderly women who are associated with Uncle Jack in some of his philanthropic work in London. I don't quite like women who are interested in philanthropic work. I think it is so forward of them. [MERRIMAN enters]

Merriman. Miss Fairfax.

[GWENDOLEN enters. MERRIMAN goes]

Cecily [advancing to meet her]. Pray let me introduce myself to you. My name is Cecily Cardew.

Gwendolen. Cecily Cardew? [Moving to her and shaking hands] What a very sweet name! Something tells me that we are going to be great friends. I like you already more than I can say. My first impressions of people are never wrong.

Cecily. How nice of you to like me so much after we have known each other such a comparatively short time. Pray sit down.

Gwendolen [still standing up]. I may call you Cecily, may I not?

Cecily. With pleasure!

Gwendolen. And you will always call me Gwendolen, won't you?

Cecily. If you wish.

Gwendolen. Then that is all quite settled, is it not?

Cecily. I hope so.

[There is a pause. They sit down together]

Gwendolen. Perhaps this might be a favorable opportunity for my mentioning who I am. My father is Lord Bracknell. You have never heard of papa, I suppose?

Cecily. I don't think so.

Gwendolen. Outside the family circle, papa, I am glad to say, is entirely unknown. I think that is quite as it should be. The home seems to me to be the proper sphere for the man. And certainly once a man begins to neglect his domestic duties, he becomes painfully effeminate, does he not?

And I don't like that. It makes men so very attractive. Cecily, mamma, whose views on education are remarkably strict, has brought me up to be extremely short-sighted; it is part of her system; so do you mind my looking at you through my glasses?

Cecily. Oh, not at all, Gwendolen. I am very fond of being looked at.

Gwendolen [after examining CECILY carefully through a lorgnette]. You are here on a short visit, I suppose.

Cecily. Oh, no, I live here.

Gwendolen [severely]. Really? Your mother, no doubt, or some female relative of advanced years, resides here also?

Cecily. Oh, no. I have no mother, nor, in fact, any relations.

Gwendolen. Indeed?

Cecily. My dear guardian, with the assistance of Miss Prism, has the arduous task of looking after me.

Gwendolen. Your guardian?

Cecily. Yes, I am Mr. Worthing's ward.

Gwendolen. Oh! It is strange he never mentioned to me that he had a ward. How secretive of him! He grows more interesting hourly. I am not sure, however, that the news inspires me with feelings of unmixed delight. [Rising and going to her] I am very fond of you, Cecily; I have liked you ever since I met you. But I am bound to state that now that I know that you are Mr. Worthing's ward, I cannot help expressing a wish you were—well, just a little older than you seem to be—and not quite so very alluring in appearance. In fact, if I may speak candidly—

Cecily. Pray do! I think that whenever one has anything unpleasant to say, one should always be quite candid.

Gwendolen. Well, to speak with perfect candour, Cecily, I wish that you were fully forty-two, and more than usually plain for your age. Ernest has a strong upright nature. He is the very soul of truth and honour. Disloyalty would be as impossible to him as deception. But even men of the noblest possible moral character are extremely susceptible to the influence of the physical charms of others. Modern, no less than Ancient History, supplies us with many most painful examples of what I refer to. If it were not so, indeed, History would be quite unreadable.

Cecily. I beg your pardon, Gwendolen, did you say Ernest?

Gwendolen. Yes.

Cecily. Oh, but it is not Mr. Ernest Worthing who is my guardian. It is his brother—his elder brother.

Gwendolen [*sitting down again*]. Ernest never mentioned to me that he had a brother.

Cecily. I am sorry to say they have not been on good terms for a long time.

Gwendolen. Ah! that accounts for it. And now that I think of it, I have never heard any man mention his brother. The subject seems distasteful to most men. Cecily, you have lifted a load from my mind. I was growing almost anxious. It would have been terrible if any cloud had come across a friendship like ours, would it not? Of course you are quite, quite sure that it is not Mr. Ernest Worthing who is your guardian?

Cecily. Quite sure. [*After a pause*] In fact, I am going to be his.

Gwendolen [*inquiringly*]. I beg your pardon?

Cecily [*rather shy and confidently*]. Dearest Gwendolen, there is no reason why I should make a secret of it to you. Our little county newspaper is sure to chronicle the fact next week. Mr. Ernest Worthing and I are engaged to be married.

Gwendolen [*quite politely, rising*]. My darling Cecily, I think there must be some slight error. Mr. Ernest Worthing is engaged to me. The announcement will appear in the *Morning Post* on Saturday at the latest.

Cecily [*very politely, rising*]. I am afraid you must be under some misconception. Ernest proposed to me exactly ten minutes ago. [*She shows her diary*]

Gwendolen [*examining the diary through her lorgnette carefully*]. It is certainly very curious, for he asked me to be his wife yesterday afternoon at 5.30. If you would care to verify the incident, pray do so. [*She produces a diary of her own*] I never travel without my diary. One should always have something sensational to read in the train. I am so sorry, dear Cecily, if it is any disappointment to you, but I am afraid I have the prior claim.

Cecily. It would distress me more than I can tell you, dear Gwendolen, if it caused you any mental or physical anguish, but I feel bound to point out that since Ernest

proposed to you he clearly has changed his mind.

Gwendolen [*meditatively*]. If the poor fellow has been entrapped into any foolish promise I shall consider it my duty to rescue him at once, and with a firm hand.

Cecily [*thoughtfully and sadly*]. Whatever unfortunate entanglement my dear boy may have got into, I will never reproach him with it after we are married.

Gwendolen. Do you allude to me, Miss Cardew, as an entanglement? You are presumptuous. On an occasion of this kind it becomes more than a moral duty to speak one's mind. It becomes a pleasure.

Cecily. Do you suggest, Miss Fairfax, that I entrapped Ernest into an engagement? How dare you? This is no time for wearing the shallow mask of manners. When I see a spade, I call it a spade.

Gwendolen [*satirically*]. I am glad to say that I have never seen a spade. It is obvious that our social spheres have been widely different.

[*MERRIMAN enters, followed by the footman. He carries a salver, table-cloth, and plate-stand. CECILY is about to retort. The presence of the servants exercises a restraining influence, under which both girls chafe*]

Merriman. Shall I lay tea here as usual, miss?

Cecily [*sternly, in a calm voice*]. Yes, as usual.

[*MERRIMAN begins to clear and lay the cloth. There is a long pause. CECILY and GWENDOLEN glare at each other*]

Gwendolen. Are there many interesting walks in the vicinity, Miss Cardew?

Cecily. Oh, yes, a great many. From the top of one of the hills quite close one can see five counties.

Gwendolen. Five counties! I don't think I should like that. I hate crowds.

Cecily [*sweetly*]. I suppose that is why you live in town?

[*GWENDOLEN bites her lip, and beats her foot nervously with her parasol*]

Gwendolen [*looking round*]. Quite a well-kept garden this is, Miss Cardew.

Cecily. So glad you like it, Miss Fairfax.

Gwendolen. I had no idea there were any flowers in the country.

Cecily. Oh, flowers are as common here. Miss Fairfax, as people are in London.

Gwendolen. Personally I cannot understand how anybody manages to exist in the country, if anybody who is anybody does. The country always bores me to death.

Cecily. Ah! This is what the newspapers call agricultural depression, is it not? I believe the aristocracy are suffering very much from it just at present. It is almost an epidemic amongst them, I have been told. May I offer you some tea, Miss Fairfax?

Gwendolen [with elaborate politeness]. Thank you. [Aside] Detestable girl! But I require tea!

Cecily [sweetly]. Sugar?

Gwendolen [superciliously]. No, thank you. Sugar is not fashionable any more.

[CECILY looks angrily at her, takes up the tongs, and puts four lumps of sugar into the cup]

Cecily [severely]. Cake or bread and butter?

Gwendolen [in a bored manner]. Bread and butter, please. Cake is rarely seen at the best houses nowadays.

[CECILY cuts a large slice of cake and puts it on the tray]

Cecily [to MERRIMAN]. Hand that to Miss Fairfax.

[MERRIMAN does so, and goes out with the footman. GWENDOLEN drinks the tea and makes a grimace. She puts down the cup at once, reaches out her hand to the bread and butter, looks at it, and finds it cake. She rises in indignation]

Gwendolen. You have filled my tea with lumps of sugar, and though I asked most distinctly for bread and butter, you have given me cake. I am known for the gentleness of my disposition, and the extraordinary sweetness of my nature, but I warn you, Miss Cardew, you may go too far.

Cecily [rising]. To save my poor, innocent, trusting boy from the machinations of any other girl there are no lengths to which I would not go.

Gwendolen. From the moment I saw you I distrusted you. I felt that you were false and deceitful. I am never deceived in such matters. My first impressions of people are invariably right.

Cecily. It seems to me, Miss Fairfax, that I am trespassing on your valuable time. No doubt you have many other calls of a

similar character to make in the neighbourhood. [JACK enters]

Gwendolen [catching sight of him]. Ernest! My own Ernest!

Jack. Gwendolen! Darling! [He offers to kiss her]

Gwendolen [drawing back]. A moment! May I ask if you are engaged to be married to this young lady? [She points to CECILY]

Jack [laughing]. To dear little Cecily! Of course not! What could have put such an idea into your pretty little head?

Gwendolen. Thank you. You may. [She offers her cheek]

Cecily [very sweetly]. I knew there must be some misunderstanding, Miss Fairfax. The gentleman whose arm is at present around your waist is my dear guardian, Mr. John Worthing.

Gwendolen. I beg your pardon?

Cecily. This is Uncle Jack.

Gwendolen [receding]. Jack! Oh!

[ALGERNON enters]

Cecily. Here is Ernest.

[ALGERNON goes straight over to CECILY without noticing anyone else]

Algernon. My own love! [He offers to kiss her]

Cecily [drawing back]. A moment, Ernest! May I ask you—are you engaged to be married to this young lady?

Algernon [looking round]. To what young lady? Good heavens! Gwendolen!

Cecily. Yes, to good heavens, Gwendolen,—I mean to Gwendolen.

Algernon [laughing]. Of course not! What could have put such an idea into your pretty little head?

Cecily. Thank you. [Presenting her cheek to be kissed] You may.

[ALGERNON kisses her]

Gwendolen. I felt there was some slight error, Miss Cardew. The gentleman who is now embracing you is my cousin, Mr. Algernon Moncrieff.

Cecily [breaking away from ALGERNON]. Algernon Moncrieff! Oh!

[The two girls move towards each other and put their arms round each other's waists as if for protection]

Cecily. Are you called Algernon?

Algernon. I cannot deny it.

Cecily. Oh!

Gwendolen. Is your name really John?

Jack [standing rather proudly]. I could

deny it if I liked. I could deny anything if I liked. But my name certainly is John. It has been John for years.

Cecily [to GWENDOLEN]. A gross deception has been practised on both of us.

Gwendolen. My poor wounded Cecily!

Cecily. My sweet, wronged Gwendolen!

Gwendolen [slowly and seriously]. You will call me sister, will you not?

[GWENDOLEN and CECILY embrace.

JACK and ALGERNON groan and walk up and down]

Cecily [rather brightly]. There is just one question I would like to be allowed to ask my guardian.

Gwendolen. An admirable idea! Mr. Worthing, there is just one question I would like to be permitted to put to you. Where is your brother Ernest? We are both engaged to be married to your brother Ernest, so it is a matter of some importance to us to know where your brother Ernest is at present.

Jack [slowly and hesitatingly]. Gwendolen—Cecily—it is very painful for me to be forced to speak the truth. It is the first time in my life that I have ever been reduced to such a painful position, and I am really quite inexperienced in doing anything of the kind. However, I will tell you quite frankly that I have no brother Ernest. I have no brother at all. I never had a brother in my life, and I certainly have not the smallest intention of ever having one in the future.

Cecily [surprised]. No brother at all?

Jack [cheerily]. None!

Gwendolen [severely]. Had you never a brother of any kind?

Jack [pleasantly]. Never. Not even of any kind.

Gwendolen. I am afraid it is quite clear, Cecily, that neither of us is engaged to be married to anyone.

Cecily. It is not a very pleasant position for a young girl suddenly to find herself in. Is it?

Gwendolen. Let us go into the house. They will hardly venture to come after us there.

Cecily. No, men are so cowardly, aren't they?

[CECILY and GWENDOLEN retire into the house with scornful looks]

Jack. This ghastly state of things is what you call Bunburying, I suppose?

Algernon. Yes, and a perfectly wonderful Bunbury it is. The most wonderful Bunbury I have ever had in my life.

Jack. Well, you've no right whatsoever to Bunbury here.

Algernon. That is absurd. One has a right to Bunbury anywhere one chooses. Every serious Bunburyist knows that.

Jack. Serious Bunburyist! Good heavens!

Algernon. Well, one must be serious about something, if one wants to have any amusement in life. I happen to be serious about Bunburying. What on earth you are serious about I haven't got the remotest idea. About everything, I should fancy. You have such an absolute trivial nature.

Jack. Well, the only small satisfaction I have in the whole of this wretched business is that your friend Bunbury is quite exploded. You won't be able to run down to the country quite so often as you used to do, dear Algy. And a very good thing, too.

Algernon. Your brother is a little off colour, isn't he, dear Jack? You won't be able to disappear to London quite so frequently as your wicked custom was. And not a bad thing, either.

Jack. As for your conduct towards Miss Cardew, I must say that your taking in a sweet, simple, innocent girl like that is quite inexcusable. To say nothing of the fact that she is my ward.

Algernon. I can see no possible defence at all for your deceiving a brilliant, clever, thoroughly experienced young lady like Miss Fairfax. To say nothing of the fact that she is my cousin.

Jack. I wanted to be engaged to Gwendolen, that is all. I love her.

Algernon. Well, I simply wanted to be engaged to Cecily. I adore her.

Jack. There is certainly no chance of your marrying Miss Cardew.

Algernon. I don't think there is much likelihood, Jack, of you and Miss Fairfax being united.

Jack. Well, that is no business of yours.

Algernon. If it was my business, I wouldn't talk about it. [He begins to eat muffins] It is very vulgar to talk about one's business. Only people like stock-brokers do that, and then merely at dinner parties.

Jack. How you can sit there, calmly eating muffins, when we are in this horrible

trouble, I can't make out. You seem to me to be perfectly heartless.

Algernon. Well, I can't eat muffins in an agitated manner. The butter would probably get on my cuffs. One should always eat muffins quite calmly. It is the only way to eat them.

Jack. I say it's perfectly heartless your eating muffins at all, under the circumstances.

Algernon. When I am in trouble, eating is the only thing that consoles me. Indeed, when I am in really great trouble, as anyone who knows me intimately will tell you, I refuse everything except food and drink. At the present moment I am eating muffins because I am unhappy. Besides, I am particularly fond of muffins [*rising*].

Jack [*rising*]. Well, that is no reason why you should eat them all in that greedy way. [*He takes the muffins from ALGERNON*]

Algernon [*offering tea-cake*]. I wish you would have tea-cake instead. I don't like tea-cake.

Jack. Good heavens! I suppose a man may eat his own muffins in his own garden.

Algernon. But you have just said it was perfectly heartless to eat muffins.

Jack. I said it was perfectly heartless of you, under the circumstances. That is a very different thing.

Algernon. That may be. But the muffins are the same. [*He seizes the muffin-dish from JACK*]

Jack. Algy, I wish to goodness you would go.

Algernon. You can't possibly ask me to go without having some dinner. It's absurd. I never go without my dinner. No one ever does, except vegetarians and people like that. Besides I have just made arrangements with Dr. Chasuble to be christened at a quarter to six under the name of Ernest.

Jack. My dear fellow, the sooner you give up that nonsense the better. I made arrangements this morning with Dr. Chasuble to be christened myself at 5.30, and I naturally will take the name of Ernest. Gwendolen would wish it. We can't both be christened Ernest. It's absurd. Besides, I have a perfect right to be christened if I like. There is no evidence at all that I ever have been christened by anybody. I should think it extremely probable I never was, and so does Dr. Chasuble. It is entirely dif-

ferent in your case. You have been christened already.

Algernon. Yes, but I have not been christened for years.

Jack. Yes, but you have been christened. That is the important thing.

Algernon. Quite so. So I know my constitution can stand it. If you are not quite sure about your ever having been christened, I must say I think it rather dangerous your venturing on it now. It might make you very unwell. You can hardly have forgotten that someone very closely connected with you was very nearly carried off this week in Paris by a severe chill.

Jack. Yes, but you said yourself that a severe chill was not hereditary.

Algernon. It usedn't to be, I know—but I daresay it is now. Science is always making wonderful improvements in things.

Jack [*picking up the muffin-dish*]. Oh, that is nonsense; you are always talking nonsense.

Algernon. Jack, you are at the muffins again! I wish you wouldn't. There are only two left. [*He takes them*] I told you I was particularly fond of muffins.

Jack. But I hate tea-cake.

Algernon. Why on earth, then, do you allow tea-cake to be served up for your guests? What ideas you have of hospitality!

Jack. Algernon! I have already told you to go. I don't want you here. Why don't you go?

Algernon. I haven't quite finished my tea yet, and there is still one muffin left.

[*JACK groans, and sinks into a chair.*
ALGERNON still continues eating]

ACT THREE

The drawing-room at the Manor House.
GWENDOLEN and CECILY are at the window, looking out into the garden.

Gwendolen. The fact that they did not follow us at once into the house, as anyone else would have done, seems to me to show that they have some sense of shame left.

Cecily. They have been eating muffins. That looks like repentance.

Gwendolen [*after a pause*]. They don't seem to notice us at all. Couldn't you cough?

Gwendolen. They're looking at us. What effrontery!

Cecily. They're approaching. That's very forward of them.

Gwendolen. Let us preserve a dignified silence.

Cecily. Certainly. It's the only thing to do now.

[*JACK enters, followed by ALGERNON.*

They whistle some dreadful popular air from a British opera]

Gwendolen. This dignified silence seems to produce an unpleasant effect.

Cecily. A most distasteful one.

Gwendolen. But we will not be the first to speak.

Cecily. Certainly not.

Gwendolen. Mr. Worthing, I have something very particular to ask you. Much depends on your reply.

Cecily. Gwendolen, your common sense is invaluable. Mr. Moncrieff, kindly answer me the following question. Why did you pretend to be my guardian's brother?

Algernon. In order that I might have an opportunity of meeting you.

Cecily [*to GWENDOLEN*]. That certainly seems a satisfactory explanation, does it not?

Gwendolen. Yes, dear, if you can believe him.

Cecily. I don't. But that does not affect the wonderful beauty of his answer.

Gwendolen. True. In matters of grave importance, style, not sincerity, is the vital thing. Mr. Worthing, what explanation can you offer to me for pretending to have a brother? Was it in order that you might have an opportunity of coming up to town to see me as often as possible?

Jack. Can you doubt it, Miss Fairfax?

Gwendolen. I have the gravest doubts upon the subject. But I intend to crush them. This is not the moment for German scepticism. [*Moving to CECILY*] Their explanations appear to be quite satisfactory, especially Mr. Worthing's. That seems to me to have the stamp of truth upon it.

Cecily. I am more than content with what Mr. Moncrieff said. His voice alone inspires one with absolute credulity.

Gwendolen. Then you think we should forgive them?

Cecily. Yes—I mean No.

Gwendolen. True! I had forgotten. There are principles at stake that one cannot surrender. Which of us should tell them? The task is not a pleasant one.

Cecily. Could we not both speak at the same time?

Gwendolen. An excellent idea! I nearly always speak at the same time as other people. Will you take the time from me?

Cecily. Certainly.

[*GWENDOLEN beats time with uplifted finger*]

Gwendolen and Cecily [*speaking together*]. Your Christian names are still an insuperable barrier. That is all!

Jack and Algernon [*speaking together*]. Our Christian names! Is that all? But we are going to be christened this afternoon.

Gwendolen [*to JACK*]. For my sake you are prepared to do this terrible thing?

Jack. I am.

Cecily [*to ALGERNON*]. To please me you are ready to face this fearful ordeal?

Algernon. I am!

Gwendolen. How absurd to talk of the equality of the sexes! Where questions of self-sacrifice are concerned, men are infinitely beyond us.

Jack. We are. [*He clasps hands with ALGERNON*]

Cecily. They have moments of physical courage of which we women know absolutely nothing.

Gwendolen [*to JACK*]. Darling!

Algernon [*to CECILY*]. Darling!

[*JACK and GWENDOLEN fall into each other's arms. ALGERNON and CECILY fall into each other's arms*]

[*MERRIMAN enters. He coughs loudly, seeing the situation*]

Merriman. Ahem! Ahem! Lady Bracknell!

Jack. Good heavens!

[*LADY BRACKNELL enters. The couples separate in alarm. MERRIMAN goes out*]

Lady Bracknell. Gwendolen! What does this mean?

Gwendolen. Merely that I am engaged to be married to Mr. Worthing, Mamma.

Lady Bracknell. Come here. Sit down. Sit down immediately. Hesitation of any kind is a sign of mental decay in the young, of physical weakness in the old. [*She turns to JACK*] Apprised, sir, of my daughter's sudden flight by her trusty maid, whose confidence I purchased by means of a small coin, I followed her at once by a luggage train. Her unhappy father is, I am glad to say, under the impression that she is at-

tending a more than usually lengthy lecture by the University Extension Scheme on the Influence of a Permanent Income on Thought. I do not propose to undeceive him. Indeed I have never undeceived him on any question. I would consider it wrong. But of course, you will clearly understand that all communication between yourself and my daughter must cease immediately from this moment. On this point, as indeed on all points, I am firm.

Jack. I am engaged to be married to Gwendolen, Lady Bracknell!

Lady Bracknell. You are nothing of the kind, sir. And now, as regards Algernon! . . . Algernon!

Algernon. Yes, Aunt Augusta.

Lady Bracknell. May I ask if it is in this house that your invalid friend Mr. Bunbury resides?

Algernon [stammering]. Oh, no! Bunbury doesn't live here. Bunbury is somewhere else at present. In fact, Bunbury is dead.

Lady Bracknell. Dead! When did Mr. Bunbury die? His death must have been extremely sudden.

Algernon [airily]. Oh, I killed Bunbury this afternoon. I mean poor Bunbury died this afternoon.

Lady Bracknell. What did he die of?

Algernon. Bunbury? Oh, he was quite exploded.

Lady Bracknell. Exploded! Was he the victim of a revolutionary outrage? I was not aware that Mr. Bunbury was interested in social legislation. If so, he is well punished for his morbidity.

Algernon. My dear Aunt Augusta, I mean he was found out! The doctors found out that Bunbury could not live, that is what I mean—so Bunbury died.

Lady Bracknell. He seems to have had great confidence in the opinion of his physicians. I am glad, however, that he made up his mind at the last to some definite course of action, and acted under proper medical advice. And now that we have finally got rid of this Mr. Bunbury, may I ask, Mr. Worthing, who is that young person whose hand my nephew Algernon is now holding in what seems to me a peculiarly unnecessary manner?

Jack. That lady is Miss Cecily Cardew, my ward.

[LADY BRACKNELL bows coldly to CECILY]

Algernon. I am engaged to be married to Cecily, Aunt Augusta.

Lady Bracknell. I beg your pardon?

Cecily. Mr. Monterieff and I are engaged to be married, Lady Bracknell.

Lady Bracknell [with a shiver, crossing to the sofa and sitting down]. I do not know whether there is anything peculiarly exciting in the air of this particular part of Hertfordshire, but the number of engagements that go on seems to me considerably above the proper average that statistics have laid down for our guidance. I think some preliminary inquiry on my part would not be out of place. Mr. Worthing, is Miss Cardew at all connected with any of the larger railway stations in London? I merely desire information. Until yesterday I had no idea that there were any families or persons whose origin was a Terminus.

[JACK looks perfectly furious, but restrains himself]

Jack [in a clear, cold voice]. Miss Cardew is the granddaughter of the late Mr. Thomas Cardew of 149, Belgrave Square, S.W.; Gervase Park, Dorking, Surrey; and the Sporrin, Fifeshire, N.B.

Lady Bracknell. That sounds not unsatisfactory. Three addresses always inspire confidence, even in tradesmen. But what proof have I of their authenticity?

Jack. I have carefully preserved the Court Guide of the period. They are open to your inspection, Lady Bracknell.

Lady Bracknell [grimly]. I have known strange errors in that publication.

Jack. Miss Cardew's family solicitors are Messrs. Markby, Markby, and Markby.

Lady Bracknell. Markby, Markby, and Markby? A firm of the very highest position in their profession. Indeed I am told that one of the Mr. Markby's is occasionally to be seen at dinner parties. So far I am satisfied.

Jack [very irritably]. How extremely kind of you, Lady Bracknell! I have also in my possession, you will be pleased to hear, certificates of Miss Cardew's birth, baptism, whooping cough, registration, vaccination, confirmation, and the measles—both the German and the English variety.

Lady Bracknell. Ah! A life crowded with incident, I see; though perhaps somewhat too exciting for a young girl. I am not myself in favour of premature experiences. [She rises, looks at her watch] Gwendolen!

the time approaches for our departure. We have not a moment to lose. As a matter of form, Mr. Worthing, I had better ask you if Miss Cardew has any little fortune?

Jack. Oh, about a hundred and thirty thousand pounds in the Funds. That is all. Good-bye, Lady Bracknell. So pleased to have seen you.

Lady Bracknell [*sitting down again*]. A moment, Mr. Worthing. A hundred and thirty thousand pounds! And in the Funds! Miss Cardew seems to me a most attractive young lady, now that I look at her. Few girls of the present day have any really solid qualities, any of the qualities that last, and improve with time. We live, I regret to say, in an age of surfaces. [*To Cecily*] Come over here, dear.

[*Cecily goes across*] Pretty child! your dress is sadly simple, and your hair seems almost as Nature might have left it. But we can soon alter all that. A thoroughly experienced French maid produces a really marvellous result in a very brief space of time. I remember recommending one to young Lady Lancing, and after three months her own husband did not know her.

Jack [*aside*]. And after six months nobody knew her.

[*Lady Bracknell glares at Jack for a few moments; then she bends, with a practised smile, to Cecily*]

Lady Bracknell. Kindly turn round, sweet child.

[*Cecily turns completely round*] No, the side view is what I want.

[*Cecily presents her profile*] Yes, quite as I expected. There are distinct social possibilities in your profile. The two weak points in our age are its want of principle and its want of profile. The chin a little higher, dear. Style largely depends on the way the chin is worn. They are worn very high, just at present. Algernon!

Algernon. Yes, Aunt Augusta!

Lady Bracknell. There are distinct social possibilities in Miss Cardew's profile.

Algernon. Cecily is the sweetest, dearest, prettiest girl in the whole world. And I don't care twopence about social possibilities.

Lady Bracknell. Never speak disrespectfully of society, Algernon. Only people who can't get into it do that. [*To Cecily*] Dear child, of course you know that Algernon

has nothing but his debts to depend upon. But I do not approve of mercenary marriages. When I married Lord Bracknell, I had no fortune of any kind. But I never dreamed for a moment of allowing that to stand in my way. Well, I suppose I must give my consent.

Algernon. Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

Lady Bracknell. Cecily, you may kiss me!

Cecily [*kissing her*]. Thank you, Lady Bracknell.

Lady Bracknell. You may also address me as Aunt Augusta for the future.

Cecily. Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

Lady Bracknell. The marriage, I think, had better take place quite soon.

Algernon. Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

Cecily. Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

Lady Bracknell. To speak frankly, I am not in favour of long engagements. They give people the opportunity of finding out each other's character before marriage, which I think is never advisable.

Jack. I beg your pardon for interrupting you, Lady Bracknell, but this engagement is quite out of the question. I am Miss Cardew's guardian, and she cannot marry without my consent until she comes of age. That consent I absolutely decline to give.

Lady Bracknell. Upon what grounds, may I ask? Algernon is an extremely, I may almost say an ostentatiously, eligible young man. He has nothing, but he looks everything. What more can one desire?

Jack. It pains me very much to have to speak frankly to you, Lady Bracknell, about your nephew, but the fact is that I do not approve at all of his moral character. I suspect him of being untruthful.

[*Algernon and Cecily look at him in indignant amazement*]

Lady Bracknell. Untruthful! My nephew Algernon? Impossible! He is an Oxonian.

Jack. I fear there can be no possible doubt about the matter. This afternoon, during my temporary absence in London on an important question of romance, he obtained admission to my house by means of the false pretence of being my brother. Under an assumed name he drank, I've just been informed by my butler, an entire pint bottle of my Perrier-Jouet, Brut, '89, a wine I was specially reserving for myself. Continuing his disgraceful deception, he succeeded in the course of the afternoon in alienating the affections of my only ward.

He subsequently stayed to tea, and devoured every single muffin. And what makes his conduct all the more heartless is, that he was perfectly well aware from the first that I have no brother, that I never had a brother, and that I don't intend to have a brother, not even of any kind. I distinctly told him so myself yesterday afternoon.

Lady Bracknell. Ahem! Mr. Worthing, after careful consideration I have decided entirely to overlook my nephew's conduct to you.

Jack. That is very generous of you, Lady Bracknell. My own decision, however, is unalterable. I decline to give my consent.

Lady Bracknell [*to Cecily*]. Come here, sweet child. [*Cecily goes over*] How old are you, dear?

Cecily. Well, I am really only eighteen, but I always admit to twenty when I go to evening parties.

Lady Bracknell. You are perfectly right in making some slight alteration. Indeed, no woman should ever be quite accurate about her age. It looks so calculating. . . . [*In a meditative manner*] Eighteen, but admitting to twenty at evening parties. Well, it will not be very long before you are of age and free from the restraints of tutelage. So I don't think your guardian's consent is, after all, a matter of any importance.

Jack. Pray excuse me, Lady Bracknell, for interrupting you again, but it is only fair to tell you that according to the terms of her grandfather's will Miss Cardew does not come legally of age till she is thirty-five.

Lady Bracknell. That does not seem to me to be a grave objection. Thirty-five is a very attractive age. London society is full of women of the very highest birth who have, of their own free choice, remained thirty-five for years. Lady Dumbleton is an instance in point. To my own knowledge she has been thirty-five ever since she arrived at the age of forty, which was many years ago now. I see no reason why our dear Cecily should not be even still more attractive at the age you mention than she is at present. There will be a large accumulation of property.

Cecily. Algy, could you wait for me till I was thirty-five?

Algernon. Of course I could, Cecily. You know I could.

Cecily. Yes, I felt it instinctively, but I couldn't wait all that time. I hate waiting even five minutes for anybody. It always makes me rather cross. I am not punctual myself, I know, but I do like punctuality in others, and waiting, even to be married, is quite out of the question.

Algernon. Then what is to be done, Cecily?

Cecily. I don't know, Mr. Moncrieff.

Lady Bracknell. My dear Mr. Worthing, as Miss Cardew states positively that she cannot wait till she is thirty-five—a remark which I am bound to say seems to me to show a somewhat impatient nature—I would beg of you to reconsider your decision.

Jack. But my dear Lady Bracknell, the matter is entirely in your own hands. The moment you consent to my marriage with Gwendolen, I will most gladly allow your nephew to form an alliance with my ward.

Lady Bracknell [*rising and drawing herself up*]. You must be quite aware that what you propose is out of the question.

Jack. Then a passionate celibacy is all that any of us can look forward to.

Lady Bracknell. That is not the destiny I propose for Gwendolen. Algernon, of course, can choose for himself. [*She pulls out her watch*] Come, dear [*to GWENDOLEN*], we have already missed five, if not six, trains. To miss any more might expose us to comment on the platform.

[*GWENDOLEN rises. DR. CHASUBLE enters*]

Chasuble. Everything is quite ready for the christenings.

Lady Bracknell. The christenings, sir! Is not that somewhat premature?

Chasuble [*looking rather puzzled, and pointing to JACK and ALGERNON*]. Both these gentlemen have expressed a desire for immediate baptism.

Lady Bracknell. At their age? The idea is grotesque and irreligious! Algernon, I forbid you to be baptised. I will not hear of such excesses. Lord Bracknell would be highly displeased if he learned that that was the way in which you wasted your time and money.

Chasuble. Am I to understand then that there are to be no christenings at all this afternoon?

Jack. I don't think that, as things are now, it would be of much practical value to either of us, Dr. Chasuble.

Chasuble. I am grieved to hear such sentiments from you, Mr. Worthing. They savour of the heretical views of the Anabaptists, views that I have completely refuted in four of my unpublished sermons. However, as your present mood seems to be one peculiarly secular, I will return to the church at once. Indeed, I have just been informed by the pew-opener that for the last hour and a half Miss Prism has been waiting for me in the vestry.

Lady Bracknell [*starting*]. Miss Prism! Did I hear you mention a Miss Prism?

Chasuble. Yes, Lady Bracknell. I am on my way to join her.

Lady Bracknell. Pray allow me to detain you for a moment. This matter may prove to be one of vital importance to Lord Bracknell and myself. Is this Miss Prism a female of repellent aspect, remotely connected with education?

Chasuble [*somewhat indignantly*]. She is the most cultivated of ladies, and the very picture of respectability.

Lady Bracknell. It is obviously the same person. May I ask what position she holds in your household?

Chasuble [*severely*]. I am a celibate, madam.

Jack [*interposing*]. Miss Prism, Lady Bracknell, has been for the last three years Miss Cardew's esteemed governess and valued companion.

Lady Bracknell. In spite of what I hear of her, I must see her at once. Let her be sent for.

Chasuble [*looking off*]. She approaches; she is nigh.

[*MISS PRISM enters hurriedly*]

Miss Prism. I was told you expected me in the vestry, dear Canon. I have been waiting for you there for an hour and three-quarters.

[*She catches sight of LADY BRACKNELL, who has fixed her with a stony stare. She grows pale and quails. She looks anxiously round as if desirous to escape*]

Lady Bracknell [*in a severe, judicial voice*]. Prism!

[*MISS PRISM bows her head in shame*] Come here, Prism!

[*MISS PRISM approaches in a humble manner*]

Prism, where is that baby?

[*General consternation. The Canon*

starts back in horror. ALGERNON and JACK pretend to be anxious to shield CECILY and GWENDOLEN from hearing the details of a terrible public scandal]

Twenty-eight years ago, Prism, you left Lord Bracknell's house, Number 104, Upper Grosvenor Street, in charge of a perambulator that contained a baby, of the male sex. You never returned. A few weeks later, through the elaborate investigations of the Metropolitan police, the perambulator was discovered at midnight, standing by itself in a remote corner of Bayswater. It contained the manuscript of a three-volume novel of more than usually revolting sentimentality.

[*MISS PRISM starts in involuntary indignation*]

But the baby was not there!

[*Everyone looks at MISS PRISM*] Prism, where is that baby?

Miss Prism [*after a pause*]. Lady Bracknell, I admit with shame that I do not know. I only wish I did. The plain facts of the case are these. On the morning of the day you mention, a day that is forever branded on my memory, I prepared as usual to take the baby out in its perambulator. I had also with me a somewhat old but capacious hand-bag in which I had intended to place the manuscript of a work of fiction that I had written during my few unoccupied hours. In a moment of mental abstraction, for which I never can forgive myself, I deposited the manuscript in the bassinette, and placed the baby in the hand-bag.

Jack [*who has been listening attentively*]. But where did you deposit the hand-bag?

Miss Prism. Do not ask me, Mr. Worthing.

Jack. Miss Prism, this is a matter of no small importance to me. I insist on knowing where you deposited the hand-bag that contained that infant.

Miss Prism. I left it in the cloak-room of one of the larger railway stations in London.

Jack. What railway station?

Miss Prism [*quite crushed*]. Victoria. The Brighton line. [*She sinks into a chair*]

Jack. I must retire to my room for a moment. Gwendolen, wait here for me.

Gwendolen. If you are not too long, I will wait here for you all my life.

[*JACK goes out in great excitement*]
Chasuble. What do you think this means, Lady Bracknell?

Lady Bracknell. I dare not even suspect, Dr. Chasuble. I need hardly tell you that in families of high position strange coincidences are not supposed to occur. They are hardly considered the thing.

[*Noises are heard overhead as if someone was throwing trunks about. Everybody looks up*]

Cecily. Uncle Jack seems strangely agitated.

Chasuble. Your guardian has a very emotional nature.

Lady Bracknell. This noise is extremely unpleasant. It sounds as if he was having an argument. I dislike arguments of any kind. They are always vulgar, and often convincing.

Chasuble [*looking up*]. It has stopped now. [*The noise is redoubled*]

Lady Bracknell. I wish he would arrive at some conclusion.

Gwendolen. This suspense is terrible. I hope it will last.

[*JACK enters with a hand-bag of black leather in his hand*]

Jack [*rushing over to Miss Prism*]. Is this the hand-bag, Miss Prism? Examine it carefully before you speak. The happiness of more than one life depends on your answer.

Miss Prism [*calmly*]. It seems to be mine. Yes, here is the injury it received through the upsetting of a Gower Street omnibus in younger and happier days. Here is the stain on the lining caused by the explosion of a temperance beverage, an incident that occurred at Leamington. And here, on the lock, are my initials. I had forgotten that in an extravagant mood I had had them placed there. The bag is undoubtedly mine. I am delighted to have it so unexpectedly restored to me. It has been a great inconvenience being without it all these years.

Jack [*in a pathetic voice*]. Miss Prism, more is restored to you than this hand-bag. I was the baby you placed in it.

Miss Prism [*amazed*]. You?

Jack [*embracing her*]. Yes . . . mother!

Miss Prism [*recoiling in indignant astonishment*]. Mr. Worthing! I am unmarried!

Jack. Unmarried! I do not deny that is a serious blow. But after all, who has the

right to cast a stone against one who has suffered? Cannot repentance wipe out an act of folly? Why should there be one law for men and another for women? Mother, I forgive you. [*He again tries to embrace her*]

Miss Prism [*still more indignant*]. Mr. Worthing, there is some error. [*Pointing to LADY BRACKNELL*] There is the lady who can tell you who you really are.

Jack [*after a pause*]. Lady Bracknell, I hate to seem inquisitive, but would you kindly inform me who I am?

Lady Bracknell. I am afraid that the news I have to give you will not altogether please you. You are the son of my poor sister, Mrs. Moncrieff, and consequently Algernon's elder brother.

Jack. Algys elder brother! Then I have a brother after all. I knew I had a brother! I always said I had a brother! Cecily,—how could you have ever doubted that I had a brother? [*He seizes hold of ALGERNON*] Dr. Chasuble, my unfortunate brother. Miss Prism, my unfortunate brother. Gwendolen, my unfortunate brother. Algys, you young scoundrel, you will have to treat me with more respect in the future. You have never behaved to me like a brother in all your life.

Algernon. Well, not till to-day, old boy, I admit. I did my best, however, though I was out of practice.

[*ALGERNON and JACK shake hands*]

Gwendolen [*to JACK*]. My own! But what own are you? What is your Christian name, now that you have become someone else?

Jack. Good heavens! . . . I had quite forgotten that point. Your decision on the subject of my name is irrevocable, I suppose?

Gwendolen. I never change, except in my affections.

Cecily. What a noble nature you have, Gwendolen!

Jack. Then the question had better be cleared up at once. Aunt Augusta, a moment. At the time when Miss Prism left me in the hand-bag, had I been christened already?

Lady Bracknell. Every luxury that money could buy, including christening, had been lavished on you by your fond and doting parents.

Jack. Then I was christened! That is settled. Now, what name was I given? Let me know the worst.

Lady Bracknell. Being the eldest son you were naturally christened after your father.

Jack [irritably]. Yes, but what was my father's Christian name?

Lady Bracknell [meditatively]. I cannot at the present moment recall what the General's Christian name was. But I have no doubt he had one. He was eccentric, I admit. But only in later years. And that was the result of the Indian climate, and marriage, and indigestion, and other things of that kind.

Jack. Algy! Can't you recollect what our father's Christian name was?

Algernon. My dear boy, we were never even on speaking terms. He died before I was a year old.

Jack. His name would appear in the Army Lists of the period, I suppose, Aunt Augusta?

Lady Bracknell. The General was essentially a man of peace, except in his domestic life. But I have no doubt his name would appear in any military directory.

Jack. The Army Lists of the last forty years are here. These delightful records should have been my constant study. [He rushes to the bookcase and tears the books out] M. Generals . . . Mallam, Maxbohm, Magley—what ghastly names they have! Markby, Migsby, Mobbs, Moncrieff! Lieutenant 1840, Captain. Lieutenant-Colonel, Colonel, General 1869, Christian names,

Ernest John. [He puts the book very quietly down and speaks quite calmly] I always told you, Gwendolen, my name was Ernest, didn't I? Well, it is Ernest after all. I mean it naturally is Ernest.

Lady Bracknell. Yes, I remember that the General was called Ernest. I knew I had some particular reason for disliking the name.

Gwendolen. Ernest! My own Ernest! I felt from the first that you could have no other name!

Jack. Gwendolen, it is a terrible thing for a man to find out suddenly that all his life he has been speaking nothing but the truth. Can you forgive me?

Gwendolen. I can. For I feel that you are sure to change.

Jack. My own one!

Chasuble [to Miss Prism]. Laetitia! [He embraces her]

Miss Prism [enthusiastically]. Frederick! At last!

Algernon. Cecily! [He embraces her]. At last!

Jack. Gwendolen! [He embraces her] At last!

Lady Bracknell. My nephew, you seem to be displaying signs of triviality.

Jack. On the contrary, Aunt Augusta, I've now realized for the first time in my life the vital Importance of Being Earnest!

THE END

CYRANO DE BERGERAC

BY EDMOND ROSTAND

Translated from the French by GERTRUDE HALL

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EDMOND ROSTAND AND HIS PLAYS

EDMOND ROSTAND, the author of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, was born in Marseilles in 1868. His first important play, *The Romancers*, was produced by the Comédie Française in 1894. In his two next plays Sarah Bernhardt acted the principal parts. He wrote *Cyrano de Bergerac* in order to provide a brilliant part for Coquelin. The first performance of *Cyrano* was an event in the theatre comparable to that of Victor Hugo's *Hernani* in 1830, and the play proved to be the greatest stage success of the age. *L'Aiglon*, Rostand's next play, was written for Bernhardt, who played the title rôle and who also took the principal part in *Chantecler* in 1910. After this Rostand wrote only two more plays. He died in 1918.

Rostand is a brilliant phenomenon, not at all characteristic of the modern French theatre. It is true that he was only one of several dramatists of his period who struggled to bring the drama back to poetry and romance; but none of these succeeded in his purpose, and only Rostand, although he too failed in his attempt, by sheer force of genius made himself significant. In French drama naturalism and realism were dominant, and plain prose was the vehicle. But all of Rostand's plays were composed in revolt against the current practice, a revolt not necessarily conscious, however; for Rostand is instinctively a poet and romancer, and was bound to be such in any age and no matter what the practice of the theatre. His plays are either concerned with the world of the past or with that of pure imagination; in any event, with a world of romance. He writes in verse, marvelously embroidered, astonishingly facile, and capable of many moods. But Rostand, though not representative of the French theatre of his own day, owes much to the theatre of the past: to Shakespeare; to the dramatists of Italy; to his French predecessors, especially Victor Hugo, who taught him the technique of melodrama and furnished him with a basic model for his verse, and to Sardou, who taught him a variety of effective stage devices. His plots are not especially original; his situations are usually those of theatre tradition; his women, at least, are mere conventional figures. Upon such shortcomings certain French critics of Rostand, who refuse to rate him as highly as his foreign admirers think proper, are rather indignantly insistent. But Rostand's merits would seem on the whole to outweigh his defects. He has an imagination that can create a world of its own; a wealth of sympathy for his own characters; an almost infallible sense of the theatre; brilliant wit and penetrating satire; and a verse that is handled with superb brilliancy and ease.

The reasons for the overwhelming popularity of *Cyrano* are fairly obvious. It portrays the historical poet, dramatist, lover, and fighter of seventeenth-century France much as he actually was, and establishes an environment for him with the same kind of completeness that D'Annunzio shows in creating the atmosphere for his *Francesca da Rimini*. It tells a good story full of tense situations, sparkles with wit, contains much beauty of phrase, portrays a wide variety of emotions, and possesses an indefinable charm compounded of all its many pleasing qualities. French of the French though it be, it is yet universal in its appeal. It is certainly not representative of the theatre of its day; it established no school; it failed to stem the tide of prose and realism, and stands apart, a lonely and engaging phenomenon; but it remains the one French play of its period that has toured the theatres of the entire world and that has made the name of its hero familiar to millions outside of his native country.

Cyrano was performed first in 1897 at the Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin, in Paris. Its first production in America was by Richard Mansfield in New York in 1898. In 1899 Coquelin, who played the rôle of Cyrano, and Sarah Bernhardt, who played that of Roxane, brought the play to London, and to New York in the year following. Its subsequent career on the stage is known to all who follow the theatre. The most celebrated as well as most successful recent revival of *Cyrano* is that by Walter Hampden.

CHARACTERS

CYRANO DE BERGERAC
CHRISTIAN DE NEUVILLETT
COMTE DE GUICHE
RAGUENEAU
LE BRET
CAPTAIN CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX
LIGNIÈRE
DE VALVERT
MONTFLEURY
BELLEROSE
JODELET
CUIGY
BRISSAILLE
A BORE
A MOUSQUETAIRE
OTHER MOUSQUETAIRE
A SPANISH OFFICER
A LIGHT-CAVALRY MAN
A DOORKEEPER
A BURGHER
HIS SON
A PICKPOCKET
A SPECTATOR
A WATCHMAN
BERTRANDOU THE FIFER
A CAPUCHIN
TWO MUSICIANS
SEVEN CADETS
THREE MARQUISES
POETS
PASTRYCOOKS

ROXANE
SISTER MARTHA
LISE
THE SWEETMEAT VENDER
MOTHER MARGARET
THE DUENNA
SISTER CLAIRE
AN ACTRESS
A SOUBRETTE
A FLOWER-GIRL
PAGES

The crowd, bourgeois, marquises, mousquetaires, pickpockets, pastrycooks, poets, Gascony Cadets, players, fiddlers, pages, children, Spanish soldiers, spectators, précieuses, actresses, bourgeoises, nuns, etc.

The action takes place in Paris and in Arras in the first half of the seventeenth century

CYRANO DE BERGERAC

ACT ONE

A PLAY AT THE HOTEL DE BOURGOGNE

The great hall of the Hotel de Bourgogne, in 1640. A sort of tennis-court arranged and decorated for theatrical performances.

The hall is a long rectangle, seen obliquely, so that one side of it constitutes the background, which runs from the position of the front wing at the right, to the line of the furthest wing at the left, and forms an angle with the stage, which is equally seen obliquely.

This stage is furnished, on both sides, along the wings, with benches. The drop-curtain is composed of two tapestry hangings, which can be drawn apart. Above a harlequin cloak, the royal escutcheon. Broad steps lead from the raised platform of the stage into the house. On either side of these steps, the musicians' seats. A row of candles fills the office of footlights.

Two galleries run along the side; the lower one is divided into boxes. No seats in the pit, which is the stage proper. At the back of the pit, that is to say, at the right, in the front, a few seats raised like steps, one above the other; and, under a stairway which leads to the upper seats, and of which the lower end only is visible, a stand decked with small candelabra, jars full of flowers, flagons and glasses, dishes heaped with sweetmeats, etc.

In the centre of the background, under the box-tier, the entrance to the theatre, large door which half opens to let in the spectators. On the panels of this door, and in several corners, and above the sweetmeat stand, red playbills announcing LA CLORISE.

At the rise of the curtain, the house is nearly dark, and still empty. The chandeliers are let down in the middle of the pit, until time to light them.

The audience, arriving gradually. Cavaliers, burghers, lackeys, pages, fiddlers, etc.

A tumult of voices is heard beyond the door; enter brusquely a CAVALIER.

Doorkeeper [running in after him]. Not so fast! Your fifteen pence!

Cavalier. I come in admission free!

Doorkeeper. And why?

Cavalier. I belong to the king's light cavalry!

Doorkeeper [to another CAVALIER who has entered]. You?

Second Cavalier. I do not pay!

Doorkeeper. But . . .

Second Cavalier. I belong to the mousquetaires!

First Cavalier [to the SECOND]. It does not begin before two. The floor is empty. Let us have a bout with foils.

[They fence with foils they have brought.]

A Lackey [entering]. Pst! . . . Flanquin!

Other Lackey [arrived a moment before]. Champagne? . . .

First Lackey [taking a pack of cards from his doublet and showing it to SECOND LACKEY]. Cards. Dice. [Sits down on the floor.] Let us have a game.

Second Lackey [sitting down likewise]. You rascal, willingly!

First Lackey [taking from his pocket a bit of candle which he lights and sticks on the floor]. I prigged an eyeful of my master's light!

One of the Watch [to a FLOWER-GIRL, who comes forward]. It is pleasant getting here before the lights. [Puts his arm around her waist.]

One of the Fencers [taking a thrust]. Hit!

One of the Gamblers. Clubs!

The Watchman [pursuing the girl]. A kiss!

The Flower-Girl. We shall be seen!

The Watchman [drawing her into a dark corner]. No, we shall not!

A Man [sitting down on the floor with others who have brought provisions]. By coming early, you get a comfortable chance to eat.

A Burgher [leading his son]. This should be a good place, my boy. Let us stay here

One of the Gamblers. Ace wins!

A Man [taking a bottle from under his cloak and sitting down]. A proper toper, toping Burgundy [drinks], I say should tope it in Burgundy House!

The Burgher [to his son]. Might one not suppose we had stumbled into some house of evil fame? [Points with his cane at the drunkard.] Guzzlers! . . . [In breaking guard one of the fencers jostles him.] Brawlers! . . . [He falls between the gamblers.] Gamesters! . . .

The Watchman [behind him, still teasing the flower-girl]. A kiss!

The Burgher [dragging his son precipitately away]. Bless my soul! . . . And to reflect that in this very house, my son, were given the plays of the great Rotrou!

The Youth. And those of the great Corneille!

[A band of PAGES holding hands rush in performing a farandole and singing.]

Pages. Tra la la la la la la la! . . .

Doorkeeper [severely to the PAGES]. Look, now! . . . you pages, you! none of your tricks!

First Page [with wounded dignity]. Sir! . . . this want of confidence . . . [As soon as the doorkeeper has turned away, briskly to the SECOND PAGE.] Have you a string about you?

Second Page. With a fish-hook at the end!

First Page. We will sit up there and angle for wigs!

A Pickpocket [surrounded by a number of individuals of dubious appearance]. Come now, my little hopefuls, and learn your A B C's of trade. Being as you're not used to hooking . . .

Second Page [shouting to other PAGES who have already taken seats in the upper gallery]. Ho! . . . Did you bring any peashooters?

Third Page [from above]. Yes! . . . And pease! . . . [Shoots down a volley of pease.]

The Youth [to his father]. What are we going to see?

The Burgher. Clorise.

The Youth. By whom?

The Burgher. By Balthazar Baro. Ah, what a play it is! . . . [Goes toward the back on his son's arm.]

Pickpocket [to his disciples]. Particularly the lace-ruffles at the knees, . . . you're to snip off carefully!

A Spectator [to another, pointing toward an upper seat]. Look! On the first night of the Cid, I was perched up there!

Pickpocket [with pantomimic suggestion of spiriting away]. Watches . . .

The Burgher [coming forward again with his son]. The actors you are about to see, my son, are among the most illustrious . . .

Pickpocket [with show of subtracting with furtive little tugs]. Pocket-handkerchiefs . . .

The Burgher. Montfleury . . .

Somebody [shouting from the upper gallery]. Make haste, and light the chandeliers!

The Burgher. Bellerose, l'Épy, the Beau-pré, Jodelet . . .

A Page [in the pit]. Ah! . . . Here comes the goody-seller!

The Sweetmeat Vender [appearing behind the stand]. Oranges . . . Milk . . . Raspberry cordial . . . Citron-wine . . .

[Hubbub at the door.]

Falsetto Voice [outside]. Make room, ruffians!

One of the Lackeys [astonished]. The marquises . . . in the pit!

Other Lackey. Oh, for an instant only!

[Enter a band of foppish YOUNG MARQUISES.]

One of the Marquises [looking around the half-empty house]. What? . . . We happen in like so many linen-draper's Without disturbing anybody? treading on any feet? . . . Too bad! too bad! too bad! [He finds himself near several other gentlemen, come in a moment before.] Cuigy, Brissaille!

[Effusive embraces.]

Cuigy. We are of the faithful indeed. We are here before the lights.

The Marquis. Ah, do not speak of it! . . . It has put me in such a humor!

Other Marquis. Be comforted, marquise here comes the candle-lighter!

The Audience [greeting the arrival of the candle-lighter]. Ah! . . .

[Many gather around the chandeliers while they are being lighted. A few have taken seats in the galleries.]

[LIGNÈRE enters, arm in arm with

CHRISTIAN DE NEUVILLETTÉ. LIGNIÈRE, in somewhat disordered apparel, appearance of gentlemanly drunkard. CHRISTIAN, becomingly dressed, but in clothes of a slightly obsolete elegance.]

Cuigy. Lignière!

Brissaille [laughing]. Not tipsy yet?

Lignière [low to CHRISTIAN]. Shall I present you? [CHRISTIAN nods assent.] Baron de Neuvillelette . . .

[Exchange of bows.]

The Audience [cheering the ascent of the first lighted chandelier]. Ah! . . .

Cuigy [to BRISSAILE, looking at CHRISTIAN]. A charming head . . . charming!

First Marquis [who has overheard]. Pooh! . . .

Lignière [presenting CHRISTIAN]. Messieurs de Cuigy . . . de Brissaille . . .

Christian [bowing]. Delighted! . . .

First Marquis [to SECOND]. He is a pretty fellow enough, but is dressed in the fashion of some other year!

Lignière [to CUIGY]. Monsieur is lately arrived from Touraine.

Christian. Yes, I have been in Paris not over twenty days. I enter the Guards tomorrow, the Cadets.

First Marquis [looking at those who appear in the boxes]. There comes the president Aubry!

Sweetmeat Vender. Oranges! Milk!

The Fiddlers [tuning]. La . . . la . . .

Cuigy [to CHRISTIAN, indicating the house which is filling]. A good house! . . .

Christian. Yes, crowded.

First Marquis. The whole of fashion!

[They give the names of the women, as, very brilliantly attired, these enter the boxes. Exchange of bows and smiles.]

Second Marquis. Mesdames de Guéménée . . .

Cuigy. De Bois-Dauphin . . .

First Marquis. Whom . . . time was! . . . we loved! . . .

Brissaille. . . de Chavigny . . .

Second Marquis. Who still plays havoc with our hearts!

Lignière. Tiens! Monsieur de Corneille has come back from Rouen!

The Youth [to his father]. The Academy is present?

The Burgher. Yes . . . I perceive more

than one member of it. Yonder are Boudu, Boissat and Cureau . . . Porchères, Colomby, Bourzeys, Bourdon, Arbaut . . . All names of which not one will be forgotten. What a beautiful thought it is!

First Marquis. Attention! Our précieuses are coming into their seats . . . Barthénoide, Urimédonte, Cassandace, Félixérie . . .

Second Marquis. Ah, how exquisite are their surnames! . . . Marquis, can you tell them off, all of them?

First Marquis. I can tell them off, all of them, marquis!

Lignière [drawing CHRISTIAN aside]. Dear fellow, I came in here to be of use to you. The lady does not come. I revert to my vice!

Christian [imploring]. No! No! . . . You who turn into ditties Town and Court, stay by me; you will be able to tell me for whom it is I am dying of love!

The Leader of the Violins [rapping on his desk with his bow]. Gentlemen! . . . [He raises his bow.]

Sweetmeat Vender. Macaroons . . . Citronade . . .

[The fiddles begin playing.]

Christian. I fear . . . oh, I fear to find that she is fanciful and intricate! I dare not speak to her, for I am of a simple wit. The language written and spoken in these days bewilders and baffles me. I am a plain soldier . . . shy, to boot.—She is always at the right, there, the end: the empty box.

Lignière [with show of leaving]. I am going.

Christian [still attempting to detain him]. Oh, no! . . . Stay, I beseech you!

Lignière. I cannot. D'Assoucy is expecting me at the pot-house. Here is a mortal drought!

Sweetmeat Vender [passing before him with a tray]. Orangeade? . . .

Lignière. Ugh!

Sweetmeat Vender. Milk? . . .

Lignière. Pah! . . .

Sweetmeat Vender. Lacrima? . . .

Lignière. Stop! [To CHRISTIAN]. I will tarry a bit. . . . Let us see this lacrima?

[Sits down at the sweetmeat stand. The VENDER pours him a glass of lacrima.]

[Shouts among the audience at the entrance of a little, merry-faced, roly-poly man.]

Audience. Ah, Ragueneau! . . .

Lignière [to CHRISTIAN]. Ragueneau, who keeps the great cook-shop.

Ragueneau [attired like a pastrycook in his Sunday best, coming quickly toward LIGNIÈRE]. Monsieur, have you seen Monsieur de Cyrano?

Lignière [presenting RAGUENEAU to CHRISTIAN]. The pastrycook of poets and of players!

Ragueneau [abashed]. Too much honor. . . .

Lignière. No modesty! . . . Mecænas! . . .

Ragueneau. It is true, those gentlemen are among my customers. . . .

Lignière. Debtors! . . . A considerable poet himself. . . .

Ragueneau. It has been said! . . .

Lignière. Daft on poetry! . . .

Ragueneau. It is true that for an ode . . .

Lignière. You are willing to give at any time a tart!

Ragueneau. . . . let. A tart-let.

Lignière. Kind soul, he tries to cheapen his charitable acts! And for a triolet were you not known to give . . . ?

Ragueneau. Rolls. Just rolls.

Lignière [severely]. Buttered! . . . And the play, you are fond of the play?

Ragueneau. It is with me a passion!

Lignière. And you settle for your entrance fee with a pastry currency. Come now, among ourselves, what did you have to give to-day for admittance here?

Ragueneau. Four custards . . . eighteen lady-fingers. [He looks all around.] Monsieur de Cyrano is not here. I wonder at it.

Lignière. And why?

Ragueneau. Montfleury is billed to play.

Lignière. So it is, indeed. That ton of man will to-day entrance us in the part of Phædo . . . Phædo! . . . But what is that to Cyrano?

Ragueneau. Have you not heard? He interdicted Montfleury, whom he has taken in aversion, from appearing for one month upon the stage.

Lignière [who is at his fourth glass]. Well?

Ragueneau. Montfleury is billed to play.

Cuigy [who has drawn near with his companions]. He cannot be prevented.

Ragueneau. He cannot? . . . Well, I am here to see!

First Marquis. What is this Cyrano?

Cuigy. A crack-brain!

Second Marquis. Of quality?

Cuigy. Enough for daily uses. He is a cadet in the Guards. [Pointing out a gentleman who is coming and going about the pit, as if in search of somebody.] But his friend Le Bret can tell you. [Calling.] Le Bret! . . . [LE BRET comes toward them.] You are looking for Bergerac?

Le Bret. Yes. I am uneasy.

Cuigy. Is it not a fact that he is a most uncommon fellow?

Le Bret [affectionately]. The most exquisite being he is that walks beneath the moon!

Ragueneau. Poet!

Cuigy. Swordsman!

Brissaille. Physicist!

Le Bret. Musician!

Lignière. And what an extraordinary aspect he presents!

Ragueneau. I will not go so far as to say that I believe our grave Philippe de Champagne will leave us a portrait of him; but, the bizarre, excessive, whimsical fellow that he is would certainly have furnished the late Jacques Callot with a type of madcap fighter for one of his masques. Hat with triple feather, doublet with twice-triple skirt, cloak which his interminable rapier lifts up behind, with pomp, like the insolent tail of a cock; prouder than all the Artabans that Gascony ever bred, he goes about in his stiff Punchinello ruff, airing a nose. . . . Ah, gentlemen, what a nose is that! One cannot look upon such a specimen of the nasige-a without exclaiming, "No! truly, the man exaggerates." . . . After that, one smiles, one says: "He will take it off." . . . But Monsieur de Bergerac never takes it off at all.

Le Bret [shaking his head]. He wears it always . . . and cuts down whoever breathes a syllable in comment.

Ragueneau [proudly]. His blade is half the shears of Fate!

First Marquis [shrugging his shoulders]. He will not come!

Ragueneau. He will. I wager you a chicken à la Ragueneau.

First Marquis [laughing]. Very well!

[Murmur of admiration in the house. ROXANE has appeared in

her box. She takes a seat in the front, her duenna at the back. CHRISTIAN, engaged in paying the SWEETMEAT VENDER, does not look.]

Second Marquis [uttering a series of small squeals]. Ah, gentlemen, she is horribly enticing!

First Marquis. A strawberry set in a peach, and smiling!

Second Marquis. So fresh, that being near her, one might catch cold in his heart!

Christian [looks up, sees ROXANE, and, agitated, seizes LIGNIERE by the arm]. That is she!

Lignière [looking]. Ah, that is she! . . .

Christian. Yes. Tell me at once. . . . Oh, I am afraid! . . .

Lignière [sipping his wine slowly]. Magdeleine Robin, surnamed Roxane Subtle. Euphuistic.

Christian. Alack-a-day!

Lignière. Unmarried. An orphan. A cousin of Cyrano's . . . the one of whom they were talking.

[While he is speaking, a richly dressed nobleman, wearing the order of the Holy Ghost on a blue ribbon across his breast, enters ROXANE'S box, and, without taking a seat, talks with her a moment.]

Christian [starting]. That man? . . .

Lignière [who is beginning to be tipsy, winking]. Hé! Hé! Comte de Guiche. Enamored of her. But married to the niece of Armand de Richelieu. Wishes to manage a match between Roxane and certain sorry lord, one Monsieur de Valvert, vicomte and . . . easy. She does not subscribe to his views, but De Guiche is powerful: he can persecute to some purpose a simple commoner. But I have duly set forth his shady machinations in a song which . . . Ho! he must bear me a grudge! The end was wicked . . . Listen! . . . [He rises, staggering, and lifting his glass, is about to sing.]

Christian. No. Good-evening.

Lignière. You are going? . . .

Christian. To find Monsieur de Valvert.

Lignière. Have a care. You are the one who will get killed. [Indicating ROXANE by a glance.] Stay. Some one is looking . . .

Christian. It is true . . .

[He remains absorbed in the contemplation of ROXANE. The pickpockets, seeing his abstracted air, draw nearer to him.]

Lignière. Ah, you are going to stay. Well, I am going. I am thirsty! And I am looked for . . . at all the public-houses! [Exit unsteadily.]

Le Bret [who has made the circuit of the house, returning toward RAGUENEAU, in a tone of relief]. Cyrano is not here.

Ragueneau. And yet . . .

Le Bret. I will trust to Fortune he has not seen the announcement.

The Audience. Begin! Begin!

One of the Marquises [watching DE GUICHE, who comes from ROXANE'S box, and crosses the pit, surrounded by obsequious satellites, among whom the VICOMTE DE VALVERT]. Always a court about him, De Guiche!

Other Marquis. Pf! . . . Another Gascon!

First Marquis. A Gascon, of the cold and supple sort. That sort succeeds. Believe me, it will be best to offer him our duty.

[They approach DE GUICHE.]

Second Marquis. These admirable ribbons! What color, Comte de Guiche? Should you call it Kiss-me-Sweet or . . . Expiring Fawn?

De Guiche. This shade is called Sick Spaniard.

First Marquis. Appropriately called, for shortly, thanks to your valor, the Spaniard will be sick indeed, in Flanders!

De Guiche. I am going upon the stage. Are you coming? [He walks toward the stage, followed by all the MARQUISES and men of quality. He turns and calls.] Valvert, come!

Christian [who has been listening and watching them, starts on hearing that name]. The vicomte! . . . Ah, in his face . . . in his face I will fling my . . . [He puts his hand to his pocket and finds the pickpocket's hand. He turns.] Hein?

Pickpocket. Ai!

Christian [without letting him go]. I was looking for a glove.

Pickpocket [with an abject smile]. And you found a hand. [In a different tone, low and rapid.] Let me go . . . I will tell you a secret.

Christian [without releasing him]. Well?

Pickpocket. Lignière who has just left you . . .

Christian [as above]. Yes? . . .

Pickpocket. Has not an hour to live. A song he made annoyed one of the great, and a hundred men—I am one of them—will be posted to-night . . .

Christian. A hundred? . . . By whom?

Pickpocket. Honor . . .

Christian [shrugging his shoulders]. Oh! . . .

Pickpocket [with great dignity]. Among rogues!

Christian. Where will they be posted?

Pickpocket. At the Porte de Nesle, on his way home. Inform him.

Christian [letting him go]. But where can I find him?

Pickpocket. Go to all the taverns: the Golden Vat, the Pine-Apple, the Belt and Bosom, the Twin Torches, the Three Funnels, and in each one leave a scrap of writing warning him.

Christian. Yes. I will run! . . . Ah, the blackguards! A hundred against one! . . . [Looks lovingly toward ROXANE.] Leave her! . . . [Furiously, looking toward VALVERT.] And him! . . . But Lignière must be prevented. [Exit running.]

[DE GUICHE, the MARQUISES, all the gentry have disappeared behind the curtain, to place themselves on the stage-seats. The pit is crowded. There is not an empty seat in the boxes or the gallery.]

The Audience. Begin!

A Burgher [whose wig goes sailing off at the end of a string held by one of the PAGES in the upper gallery]. My wig!

Screams of Delight. He is bald! . . . The pages! . . . Well done! . . . Ha, ha, ha! . . .

The Burgher [furious, shaking his fist]. Imp of Satan! . . .

[Laughter and screams, beginning very loud and decreasing suddenly. Dead silence.]

Le Bret [astonished]. This sudden hush? . . . [One of the spectators whispers in his ear.] Ah? . . .

The Spectator. I have it from a reliable quarter.

Running Murmurs. Hush! . . . Has he come? No! . . . Yes, he has! . . . In the

box with the grating. . . . The cardinal! . . . the cardinal! . . . the cardinal! . . .

One of the Pages. What a shame! . . . Now we shall have to behave!

[Knocking on the stage. Complete stillness. Pause.]

Voice of one of the Marquises [breaking the deep silence, behind the curtain]. Snuff that candle!

Other Marquis [thrusting his head out between the curtains]. A chair!

[A chair is passed from hand to hand, above the heads. The MARQUIS takes it and disappears, after kissing his hand repeatedly toward the boxes.]

A Spectator. Silence!

[Once more, the three knocks. The curtain opens. Tableau. The MARQUISES seated at the sides, in attitudes of languid haughtiness. The stage-setting is the faint-colored bluish sort usual in a pastoral. Four small crystal candelabra light the stage. The violins play softly.]

Le Bret [to RAGUENEAU, under breath]. Is Montfleury the first to appear?

Ragueneau [likewise under breath]. Yes. The opening lines are his.

Le Bret. Cyrano is not here.

Ragueneau. I have lost my wager.

Le Bret. Let us be thankful. Let us be thankful.

[A bagpipe is heard. MONTFLEURY appears upon the stage, enormous, in a conventional shepherd's costume, with a rose-wreathed hat set jauntily on the side of his head, breathing into a beribboned bagpipe.]

The Pit [applauding]. Bravo, Montfleury! Montfleury!

Montfleury [after bowing, proceeds to play the part of PHŒDOL].

Happy the man who, freed from Fashion's fickle sway,

In exile self-prescribed whiles peaceful hours away;

Who when Zephyrus sighs amid the answering trees . . .

A Voice [from the middle of the pit]. Rogue! Did I not forbid you for one month?

[*Consternation. Every one looks around. Murmurs.*]

Various Voices. Hein? What? What is the matter?

[*Many in the boxes rise to see.*]

Craigy. It is he!

Le Bret [*alarmed*]. Cyrano!

The Voice. King of the Obese! Incontinently vanish! . . .

The Whole Audience [*indignantly*]. Oh! . . .

Montfleury. But . . .

The Voice. You stop to muse upon the matter?

Several Voices [*from the pit and the boxes*]. Hush! . . . Enough! . . . Proceed, Montfleury. . . . Fear nothing!

Montfleury [*in an unsteady voice*]. Happy the man who freed from Fashion's f— . . .

The Voice [*more threatening than before*]. How is this? Shall I be constrained, Man of the Monster Belly, to enforce my regulation . . . regularly?

[*An arm holding a cane leaps above the level of the heads.*]

Montfleury [*in a voice growing fainter and fainter*].

Happy the man . . .

[*The cane is wildly flourished.*]

The Voice. Leave the stage!

The Pit. Oh! . . .

Montfleury [*choking*].

Happy the man who freed . . .

Cyrano [*appears above the audience, standing upon a chair, his arms folded on his chest, his hat at a combative angle, his moustache on end, his nose terrifying*]. Ah! I shall lose my temper!

[*Sensation at sight of him.*]

Montfleury [*to the MARQUISES*]. Messieurs, I appeal to you!

One of the Marquises [*languidly*]. But go ahead! . . . Play!

Cyrano. Fat man, if you attempt it, I will dust the paint off you with this!

The Marquis. Enough!

Cyrano. Let every little landlord keep silence in his seat, or I will ruffle his ribbons with my cane!

All the Marquises [*rising*]. This is too much! . . . Montfleury. . . .

Cyrano. Let Montfleury go home, or stay, and, having cut his ears off, I will disembowel him!

A Voice. But . . .

Cyrano. Let him go home, I said!

Other Voice. But after all . . .

Cyrano. It is not yet done? [*With show of turning up his sleeves*]. Very well, upon that stage, as on a platter trimmed with green, you shall see me carve that mount of brawn . . .

Montfleury [*calling up his whole dignity*]. Monsieur, you cast indignity, in my person, upon the Muse!

Cyrano [*very civilly*]. Monsieur, if that lady, with whom you have taught to do, had the pleasure of beholding you . . . just as you stand, there, like a decorated pot! . . . she could not live, I do protest, but she hurled her buskin at you!

The Pit. Montfleury! . . . Montfleury! . . . Give us Baro's piece!

Cyrano [*to those shouting around him*]. I beg you will show some regard for my scabbard: it is ready to give up the sword!

[*The space around him widens.*]

The Crowd [*backing away*]. Hey . . . softly, there!

Cyrano [*to MONTFLEURY*]. Go off!

The Crowd [*closing again, and grumbling*]. Oh! . . . Oh!

Cyrano [*turning suddenly*]. Has somebody objections?

[*The crowd again pushes away from him.*]

A Voice [*at the back, singing*].

Monsieur de Cyrano, one sees,

Inclines to be tyrannical;

In spite of that tyrannicle

We shall see La Clorise!

The Whole Audience [*catching up the tune*]. La Clorise! La Clorise!

Cyrano. Let me hear that song again, and I will do you all to death with my stick!

A Burgher. Samson come back! . . .

Cyrano. Lend me your jaw, good man!

A Lady [*in one of the boxes*]. This is unheard of!

A Man. It is scandalous!

A Burgher. It is irritating, to say no more.

A Page. What fun it is!

The Pit. Hsss! . . . Montfleury! . . . Cyrano! . . .

Cyrano. Be still! . . .

The Pit [*in uproar*]. Hee-haw! . . .

Baaaaah! . . . Bow-wow! . . . Cockadoodledoooooo!

Cyrano. I will . . .

A Page. Meeow!

Cyrano. I order you to hold your tongues! . . . I dare the floor collectively to utter another sound! . . . I challenge you, one and all! . . . I will take down your names . . . Step forward, budding heroes! Each in his turn. You shall be given numbers. Come, which one of you will open the joust with me? You, monsieur? No! You? No! The first that offers is promised all the mortuary honors due the brave. Let all who wish to die hold up their hands! [Silence.] It is modesty that makes you shrink from the sight of my naked sword? Not a name? Not a hand?—Very good. Then I proceed. [Turning toward the stage where MONTFLEURY is waiting in terror.] As I was saying, it is my wish to see the stage cured of this tumor. Otherwise . . . [claps hand to his sword] the lancet!

Montfleury. I . . .

Cyrano [gets down from his chair, and sits in the space that has become vacant around him, with the ease of one at home]. Thrice will I clap my hands, O plenilune! At the third clap . . . eclipse!

The Pit [diverted]. Ah! . . .

Cyrano [clapping his hands]. One! . . .

Montfleury. I . . .

A Voice [from one of the boxes]. Do not go! . . .

The Pit. He will stay! . . . He will go! . . .

Montfleury. Messieurs, I feel . . .

Cyrano. Two! . . .

Montfleury. I feel it will perhaps be wiser . . .

Cyrano. Three! . . .

[MONTFLEURY disappears, as if through a trap-door. Storm of laughter, hissing, catcalls.]

The House. Hoo! . . . Hoo! . . . Milk-sop! . . . Come back! . . .

Cyrano [beaming, leans back in his chair and crosses his legs]. Let him come back, if he dare!

A Burgher. The spokesman of the company!

[BELLEROSE comes forward on the stage and bows.]

The Boxes. Ah, there comes Bellerose!

Bellerose [with elegant bearing and diction]. Noble ladies and gentlemen . . .

The Pit. No! No! Jodelet . . . We want Jodelet! . . .

Jodelet [comes forward, speaks through his nose]. Pack of swine!

The Pit. That is right! . . . Well said! . . . Bravo!

Jodelet. Don't bravo me! . . . The portly tragedian, whose paunch is your delight, felt sick! . . .

The Pit. He is a poltroon! . . .

Jodelet. He was obliged to leave. . . .

The Pit. Let him come back!

Some. No!

Others. Yes! . . .

A Youth [to CYRANO]. But, when all is said, monsieur, what good grounds have you for hating Montfleury?

Cyrano [amiably, sitting as before]. Young gosling, I have two, whereof each, singly, would be ample. Primo: He is an execrable actor, who bellows, and with grunts that would disgrace a water-carrier launches the verse that should go forth as if on pinions! . . . Secundo: is my secret.

The Old Burgher [behind CYRANO]. But without compunction you deprive us of hearing La Clorise. I am determined . . .

Cyrano [turning his chair around so as to face the old gentleman; respectfully]. Venerable mule, old Baro's verses being what they are, I do it without compunction, as you say.

The Précieuses [in the boxes]. Ha! . . . Ho! . . . Our own Baro! . . . My dear, did you hear that? How can such a thing be said? . . . Ha! . . . Ho! . . .

Cyrano [turning his chair so as to face the boxes; gallantly]. Beautiful creatures, do you bloom and shine, be ministers of dreams, your smiles our anodyne. Inspire poets, but poems . . . spare to judge!

Bellerose. But the money which must be given back at the door!

Cyrano [turning his chair to face the stage]. Bellerose, you have said the only intelligent thing that has, as yet, been said! Far from me to wrong by so much as a fringe the worshipful mantle of Thespis. . . . [He rises and flings a bag upon the stage.] Catch! . . . and keep quiet!

The House [dazzled]. Ah! . . . Oh! . . .

Jodelet [nimbly picking up the bag, weighing it with his hand]. For such a

price, you are authorized, monsieur, to come and stop the performance every day!

The House. Hoo! . . . Hoo! . . .

Jodelet. Should we be hooted in a body! . . .

Bellerose. The house must be evacuated!

Jodelet. Evacuate it!

[*The audience begins to leave;*

CYRANO looking on with a satisfied air. The crowd, however, becoming interested in the following scene, the exodus is suspended. The women in the boxes who were already standing and had put on their wraps, stop to listen and end by resuming their seats.]

Le Bret [to *CYRANO*]. What you have done . . . is mad!

A Bore. Montfleury! . . . the eminent actor! . . . What a scandal! . . . But the Duc de Candale is his patron! . . . Have you a patron, you?

Cyrano. No!

The Bore. You have not?

Cyrano. No!

The Bore. What? You are not protected by some great nobleman under the cover of whose name . . .

Cyrano [exasperated]. No, I have told you twice. Must I say the same thing thrice? No, I have no protector . . . [hand on sword] but this will do.

The Bore. Then, of course, you will leave town.

Cyrano. That will depend.

The Bore. But the Duc de Candale has a long arm . . .

Cyrano. Not so long as mine . . . [pointing to his sword] pieced out with this!

The Bore. But you cannot have the presumption . . .

Cyrano. I can, yes.

The Bore. But . . .

Cyrano. And now, . . . face about!

The Bore. But . . .

Cyrano. Face about, I say . . . or else, tell me why you are looking at my nose.

The Bore [bewildered]. I . . .

Cyrano [advancing upon him]. In what is it unusual?

The Bore [backing]. Your worship is mistaken.

Cyrano [same business as above]. Is it flabby and pendulous, like a proboscis?

The Bore. I never said . . .

Cyrano. Or hooked like a hawk's beak?

The Bore. I . . .

Cyrano. Do you discern a mole upon the tip?

The Bore. But . . .

Cyrano. Or is a fly disporting himself thereon? What is there wonderful about it?

The Bore. Oh . . .

Cyrano. Is it a freak of nature?

The Bore. But I had refrained from casting so much as a glance at it!

Cyrano. And why, I pray, should you not look at it?

The Bore. I had . . .

Cyrano. So it disgusts you?

The Bore. Sir . . .

Cyrano. Its color strikes you as unwholesome?

The Bore. Sir . . .

Cyrano. Its shape, unfortunate?

The Bore. But far from it!

Cyrano. Then wherefore that depreciating air? . . . Perhaps monsieur thinks it a shade too large?

The Bore. Indeed not. No, indeed. I think it small . . . small,—I should have said, minute!

Cyrano. What? How? Charge me with such a ridiculous defect? Small, my nose? Ho! . . .

The Bore. Heavens!

Cyrano. Enormous, my nose! . . . Contemptible stutterer, snub-nosed and flat-headed, be it known to you that I am proud, proud of such an appendage! Inasmuch as a great nose is properly the index of an affable, kindly, courteous man, witty, liberal, brave, such as I am! and such as you are for evermore precluded from supposing yourself, deplorable rogue! For the inglorious surface my hand encounters above your ruff, is no less devoid—[Strikes him.]

The Bore. Aï! aï! . . .

Cyrano. Of pride, alacrity and sweep, of perception and of gift, of heavenly spark, of sumptuousness, to sum up all, of nose, than that [turns him around by the shoulders and suits the action to the word], which stops my boot below your spine!

The Bore [running off]. Help! The watch! . . .

Cyrano. Warning to the idle who might find entertainment in my organ of smell.

. . . And if the facetious fellow be of birth,

my custom is, before I let him go to chasten him, in front, and higher up, with steel, and not with hide!

De Guiche [*who has stepped down from the stage with the MARQUISES*]. He is becoming tiresome!

Valvert [*shrugging his shoulders*]. It is empty bluster!

De Guiche. Will no one take him up?

Valvert. No one? . . . Wait! I will have one of those shots at him! [*He approaches CYRANO who is watching him, and stops in front of him, in an attitude of silly swagger.*] Your . . . your nose is . . . err . . . Your nose . . . is very large!

Cyrano [*gravely*]. Very.

Valvert [*laughs*]. Ha! . . .

Cyrano [*imperturbable*]. Is that all?

Valvert. But . . .

Cyrano. Ah, no, young man, that is not enough! You might have said, dear me, there are a thousand things . . . varying the tone . . . For instance . . . here you are:—Aggressive: "I, monsieur, if I had such a nose, nothing would serve but I must cut it off!" Amicable: "It must be in your way while drinking; you ought to have a special beaker made!" Descriptive: "It is a crag! . . . a peak! . . . a promontory! . . . A promontory, did I say? . . . It is a peninsula!" Inquisitive: "What may the office be of that oblong receptacle? Is it an ink-horn or a scissor-case?" Mincing: "Do you so dote on birds, you have, fond as a father, been at pains to fit the little darlings with a roost?" Blunt: "Tell me, monsieur, you, when you smoke, is it possible you blow the vapor through your nose without a neighbor crying 'The chimney is afire?'" Anxious: "Go with caution, I beseech, lest your head, dragged over by that weight, should drag you over!" Tender: "Have a little sun-shade made for it! It might get freckled!" Learned: "None but the beast, monsieur, mentioned by Aristophanes, the hippocampelephantocamelos, can have borne beneath his forehead so much cartilage and bone!" Off-hand: "What, comrade, is that sort of peg in style? Capital to hang one's hat upon!" Emphatic: "No wind can hope, O lordly nose, to give the whole of you a cold, but the Nor-Wester!" Dramatic: "It is the Red Sea when it bleeds!" Admiring: "What a sign for a perfumer's shop!" Lyrical: "Art thou a

Triton, and is that thy conch?" Simple: "A monument! When is admission free?" Deferent: "Suffer, monsieur, that I should pay you my respects: that is what I call possessing a house of your own!" Rustic: "Hi, boys! Call that a nose? Ye don't gull me! It's either a prize carrot or else a stunted gourd!" Military: "Level against the cavalry!" Practical: "Will you put it up for raffle? Indubitably, sir, it will be the feature of the game!" And finally in parody of weeping Pyramus: "Behold, behold the nose that traitorously destroyed the beauty of its master! and is blushing for the same!"—That, my dear sir, or something not unlike, is what you would have said to me, had you the smallest leaven of letters or of wit; but of wit, O most pitiable of objects made by God, you never had a rudiment, and of letters, you have just those that are needed to spell "fool!"—But, had it been otherwise, and had you been possessed of the fertile fancy requisite to shower upon me, here, in this noble company, that volley of sprightly pleasantries, still should you not have delivered yourself of so much as a quarter of the tenth part of the beginning of the first. . . . For I let off these good things at myself, and with sufficient zest, but do not suffer another to let them off at me!

De Guiche [*attempting to lead away the amazed vicomte*]. Let be, vicomte!

Valvert. That insufferable haughty bearing! . . . A clodhopper without . . . without so much as gloves . . . who goes abroad without points . . . or bow-knots! . . .

Cyrano. My foppery is of the inner man. I do not trick myself out like a popinjay, but I am more fastidious, if I am not so showy. I would not sally forth, by any chance, not washed quite clean of an affront; my conscience foggy about the eye, my honor crumpled, my nicety black-rimmed. I walk with all upon me furnished bright. I plume myself with independence and straightforwardness. It is not a handsome figure, it is my soul, I hold erect as in a brace. I go decked with exploits in place of ribbon bows. I taper to a point my wit like a moustache. And at my passage through the crowd true sayings ring like spurs!

Valvert. But, sir . . .

Cyrano. I am without gloves? . . . a

mighty matter! I only had one left, of a very ancient pair, and even that became a burden to me . . . I left it in somebody's face.

Valvert. Villian, clod-poll, flat-foot, refuse of the earth!

Cyrano [taking off his hat and bowing as if the VICOMTE had been introducing himself]. Ah? . . . And mine, Cyrano-Savinien-Hercule of Bergerac!

Valvert [exasperated]. Buffoon!

Cyrano [giving a sudden cry, as if seized with a cramp]. Ai! . . .

Valvert [who had started toward the back, turning]. What is he saying now?

Cyrano [screwing his face as if in pain]. It must have leave to stir . . . it has a cramp! It is bad for it to be kept still so long!

Valvert. What is the matter?

Cyrano. My rapier prickles like a foot asleep!

Valvert [drawing]. So be it!

Cyrano. I shall give you a charming little hurt!

Valvert [contemptuous]. A poet!

Cyrano. Yes, a poet, . . . and to such an extent, that while we fence, I will, hop! extempore, compose you a ballade!

Valvert. A ballade?

Cyrano. I fear you do not know what that is.

Valvert. But . . .

Cyrano [as if saying a lesson]. The ballade is composed of three stanzas of eight lines each . . .

Valvert [stamps with his feet]. Oh! . . .

Cyrano [continuing]. And an envoi of four.

Valvert. You . . .

Cyrano. I will with the same breath fight you and compose one. And at the last line, I will hit you.

Valvert. Indeed you will not!

Cyrano. No? . . . [Declaiming.]
Ballade of the duel which in Burgundy
House

Monsieur de Bergerac fought with a jack-anapes.

Valvert. And what is that, if you please?

Cyrano. That is the title.

The Audience [at the highest pitch of excitement]. Make room! . . . Good sport! . . . Stand aside! . . . Keep still! . . .

[Tableau. A ring, in the pit, of the

interested; the MARQUISES and OFFICERS scattered among the BURGEERS and COMMON PEOPLE. The PAGES have climbed on the shoulders of various ones, the better to see. All the women are standing in the boxes. At the right, DE GUICHE and his attendant gentlemen. At left, LE BRET, RAGUENEAU, CUIGY, etc.]

Cyrano [closing his eyes a second]. Wait. I am settling upon the rhymes. There. I have them.

[In declaiming, he suits the action to the word.]

Of my broad felt made lighter,

I cast my mantle broad,

And stand, poet and fighter,

To do and to record.

I bow, I draw my sword . . .

En garde! with steel and wit

I play you at first abord . . .

At the last line, I hit!

[They begin fencing.]

You should have been politer;

Where had you best be gored?

The left side or the right—ah?

Or next your azure cord?

Or where the spleen is stored?

Or in the stomach pit?

Come we to quick accord . . .

At the last line, I hit!

You falter, you turn whiter?

You do so to afford

Your foe a rhyme in "iter"?

You thrust at me—I ward—

And balance is restored.

Laridon! Look to your spit! . . .

No, you shall not be floored

Before my cue to hit!

[He announces solemnly.]

ENVOI

Prince, call upon the Lord! . . .

I skirmish . . . feint a bit . . .

I lunge! . . . I keep my word!

[The VICOMTE staggers; CYRANO bows.]

At the last line, I hit!

[Acclamations. Applause from the boxes. Flowers and handkerchiefs are thrown. The OFFICERS surround and congratulate CYRANO. RAGUENEAU dances with delight. LE BRET is tearfully joyous and

at the same time highly troubled.
The friends of the VICOMTE support him off the stage.]

The Crowd [in a long shout]. Ah! . . .

A Light-Cavalry Man. Superb!

A Woman. Sweet!

Ragueneau. Astounding!

A Marquis. Novel!

Le Bret. Insensate!

The Crowd [pressing around CYRANO].
Congratulations! . . . Well done! . . .
Bravo! . . .

A Woman's Voice. He is a hero!

A Mousquetaire [striding swiftly toward CYRANO, with outstretched hand]. Monsieur, will you allow me? It was quite, quite excellently done, and I think I know whereof I speak. But, as a fact, I expressed my mind before, by making a huge noise. . . . [He retires.]

Cyrano [to CUIGY]. Who may the gentleman be?

Cuigy. D'Artagnan.

Le Bret [to CYRANO, taking his arm]. Come, I wish to talk with you.

Cyrano. Wait till the crowd has thinned.
[TO BELLEROSE.] I may remain?

Bellerose [deferentially]. Why, certainly!
[Shouts are heard outside.]

Jodelet [after looking]. They are hooting Montfleury.

Bellerose [solemnly]. Sic transit! . . .
[In a different tone, to the doorkeeper and the candle snuffer.] Sweep and close. Leave the lights. We shall come back, after eating, to rehearse a new farce for to-morrow.

[Exeunt JODELET and BELLEROSE,
after bowing very low to CYRANO.]

The Doorkeeper [to CYRANO]. Monsieur will not be going to dinner?

Cyrano. I? . . . No.

[The doorkeeper withdraws.]

Le Bret [to CYRANO]. And this, because? . . .

Cyrano [proudly]. Because . . . [in a different tone, having seen that the doorkeeper is too far to overhear] I have not a penny!

Le Bret [making the motion of flinging a bag]. How is this? The bag of crowns . . .

Cyrano. Monthly remittance, thou last-est but a day!

Le Bret. And to keep you the remainder of the month? . . .

Cyrano. Nothing is left!

Le Bret. But then, flinging that bag, what a child's prank!

Cyrano. But what a gesture! . . .

The Sweetmeat Vender [coughing behind her little counter]. Hm! . . . [CYRANO and LE BRET turn toward her. She comes timidly forward.] Monsieur, to know you have not eaten . . . makes my heart ache. [Pointing to the sweetmeat-stand.] I have there all that is needed . . . [impulsively], Help yourself!

Cyrano [taking off his hat]. Dear child, despite my Gascon pride, which forbids that I should profit at your hand by the most inconsiderable of dainties, I fear too much less a denial should grieve you: I will accept therefore . . . [He goes to the stand and selects.] Oh, a trifle! . . . A grape off this . . . [She proffers the bunch, he takes a single grape.] No . . . one! This glass of water . . . [She starts to pour wine into it, he stops her.] No . . . clear! And half a macaroon.

[He breaks in two the macaroon, and returns half.]

Le Bret. This comes near being silly!

Sweetmeat Vender. Oh, you will take something more! . . .

Cyrano. Yes. Your hand to kiss.

[He kisses the hand she holds out to him, as if it were that of a princess.]

Sweetmeat Vender. Monsieur, I thank you. [Curtseys.] Good-evening! [Exit.]

Cyrano [to LE BRET]. I am listening [He establishes himself before the stand, sets the macaroon before him.] Dinner! [does the same with the glass of water]. Drink! [and with the grape]. Dessert! [He sits down.] La! let me begin! I was as hungry as a wolf! [Eating.] You were saying?

Le Bret. That if you listen to none but those great boobies and swashbucklers your judgment will become wholly perverted. Inquire, will you, of the sensible, concerning the effect produced to-day by your prowesses.

Cyrano [finishing his macaroon]. Enormous!

Le Bret. The cardinal . . .

Cyrano [beaming]. He was there, the cardinal?

Le Bret. Must have found what you did . . .

Cyrano. To a degree, original.

Le Bret. Still . . .

Cyrano. He is a poet. It cannot be distasteful to him wholly that one should deal confusion to a fellow-poet's play.

Le Bret. But, seriously, you make too many enemies!

Cyrano [*biting into the grape*]. How many, thereabouts, should you think I made to-night?

Le Bret. Eight and forty. Not mentioning the women.

Cyrano. Come, tell them over!

Le Bret. Montfieur, the old merchant, De Guiche, the Vicomte, Baro, the whole Academy . . .

Cyrano. Enough! You steep me in bliss!

Le Bret. But whither will the road you follow lead you? What can your object be?

Cyrano. I was wandering aimlessly; too many roads were open . . . too many resolves, too complex, allowed of being taken. I took . . .

Le Bret. Which?

Cyrano. By far the simplest of them all. I decided to be, in every matter, always, admirable!

Le Bret [*shrugging his shoulders*]. That will do.—But tell me, will you not, the motive—look, the true one!—of your dislike to Montfieur.

Cyrano [*rising*]. That old Silenus, who has not seen his knees this many a year, still believes himself a delicate desperate danger to the fair. And as he struts and burrs upon the stage, makes sheep's-eyes at them with his moist frog's-eyes. And I have hated him . . . oh, properly! . . . since the night he was so daring as to cast his glance on her . . . her, who—Oh, I thought I saw a slug crawl over a flower!

Le Bret [*amazed*]. Hey? What? Is it possible? . . .

Cyrano [*with a bitter laugh*]. That I should love? [*In a different tone, seriously*.] I love.

Le Bret. And may one know? . . . You never told me . . .

Cyrano. Whom I love? . . . Come, think a little. The dream of being beloved, even

by the beautiful, is made, to me, an empty dream indeed by this good nose, my fore-runner ever by a quarter of an hour. Hence, whom should I love? . . . It seems superfluous to tell you! . . . I love . . . it was inevitable! . . . the most beautiful that breathes!

Le Bret. The most beautiful? . . .

Cyrano. No less, in the whole world! And the most resplendent, and the most delicate of wit, and among the golden-haired . . . [*with overwhelming despair*]. Still the superlative!

Le Bret. Dear me, what is this fair one?

Cyrano. All unawares, a deadly snare, exquisite without concern to be so. A snare of nature's own, a musk-rose; in which ambush Love lies low. Who has seen her smile remembers the ineffable! There is not a thing so common but she turns it into prettiness; and in the merest nod or beck she can make manifest all the attributes of a goddess. No, Venus! you cannot step into your iridescent shell, nor, Dian, you, walk through the blossoming groves, as she steps into her chair and walks in Paris!

Le Bret. Sapristi! I understand! It is clear!

Cyrano. It is pellucid.

Le Bret. Magdeleine Robin, your cousin?

Cyrano. Yes, Roxane.

Le Bret. But, what could be better? You love her? Tell her so! You covered yourself with glory in her sight a moment since.

Cyrano. Look well at me, dear friend, and tell me how much hope you think can be justly entertained with this protuberance. Oh, I foster no illusions! . . . Sometimes, indeed, yes, in the violet dusk, I yield, even I! to a dreamy mood. I penetrate some garden that lies sweetening the hour. With my poor great devil of a nose I sniff the April. . . . And as I follow with my eyes some woman passing with some cavalier, I think how dear would I hold having to walk beside me, linked like that, slowly, in the soft moonlight, such a one! I kindle—I forget—and then . . . then suddenly I see the shadow of my profile upon the garden-wall!

Le Bret [*touched*]. My friend . . .

Cyrano. Friend, I experience a bad

half hour sometimes, in feeling so unsightly . . . and alone.

Le Bret [in quick sympathy, taking his hand]. You weep?

Cyrano. Ah, God forbid! That? Never! No, that would be unsightly to excess! That a tear should course the whole length of this nose! Never, so long as I am accountable, shall the divine loveliness of tears be implicated with so much gross ugliness! Mark me well, nothing is so holy as are tears, nothing! and never shall it be that, rousing mirth through me, a single one of them shall seem ridiculous!

Le Bret. Come, do not despond! Love is a lottery.

Cyrano [shaking his head]. No! I love Cleopatra: do I resemble Cæsar? I worship Berenice: do I put you in mind of Titus?

Le Bret. But your courage . . . and your wit!—The little girl who but a moment ago bestowed on you that very modest meal, her eyes, you must have seen as much, did not exactly hate you!

Cyrano [impressed]. That is true!

Le Bret. You see? So, then!—But Roxane herself, in following your duel, went lily-pale.

Cyrano. Lily-pale? . . .

Le Bret. Her mind, her heart as well, are struck with wonder! Be bold, speak to her, in order that she may . . .

Cyrano. Laugh in my face! . . . No, there is but one thing upon earth I fear. . . . It is that.

The Doorkeeper [admitting the DUENNA to CYRANO]. Monsieur, you are inquired for.

Cyrano [seeing the DUENNA]. Ah, my God! . . . her duenna!

The Duenna [with a great curtsey]. Somebody wishes to know of her valorous cousin where one may, in private, see him.

Cyrano [upset]. See me?

The Duenna [with curtsey]. See you. There are things for your ear.

Cyrano. There are . . . ?

The Duenna [other curtsey]. Things.

Cyrano [staggering]. Ah, my God! . . .

The Duenna. Somebody intends, to-morrow, at the earliest roses of the dawn, to hear Mass at Saint Roch.

Cyrano [upholds himself by leaning on LE BRET]. Ah, my God!

The Duenna. That over, where might one step in a moment, have a little talk?

Cyrano [losing his senses]. Where? . . . I . . . But . . . Ah, my God!

The Duenna. Expedition, if you please.

Cyrano. I am casting about . . .

The Duenna. Where?

Cyrano. At . . . at . . . at Ragueneau's . . . the pastrycook's.

The Duenna. He lodges?

Cyrano. In . . . In Rue . . . Ah, my God! my God! . . . St. Honoré.

The Duenna [retiring]. We will be there. Do not fail. At seven.

Cyrano. I will not fail. [Exit DUENNA.]

Cyrano [falling on LE BRET's neck]. To me . . . from her . . . a meeting!

Le Bret. Well, your gloom is dispelled?

Cyrano. Ah, to whatever end it may be, she is aware of my existence!

Le Bret. And now you will be calm?

Cyrano [beside himself]. Now, I shall be fulminating and frenetical! I want an army all complete to put to rout! I have ten hearts and twenty arms . . . I cannot now be suited with felling dwarfs to earth. . . . [At the top of his lungs.] Giants are what I want!

[During the last lines, on the stage at the back, shadowy shapes of players have been moving about. The rehearsal has begun; the fiddlers have resumed their places.]

A Voice [from the stage]. Hey! Psst! Over there! A little lower. We are trying to rehearse!

Cyrano [laughing]. We are going!

[He goes toward the back.]

[Through the street door, enter CUIGY, BRISSAILLE, several OFFICERS supporting LIGNIÈRE in a state of complete intoxication.]

Cuigy. Cyrano!

Cyrano. What is this?

Cuigy. A *turdus vinaticus* we are bringing you.

Cyrano [recognizing him]. Lignière! Hey, what has happened to you?

Cuigy. He is looking for you.

Brissaille. He cannot go home.

Cyrano. Why?

Lignière [in a thick voice, showing him a bit of crumpled paper]. This note bids me beware . . . A hundred men against

me . . . on account of lampoon . . . grave danger threatening me . . . Porte de Nesle . . . must pass it to get home. Let me come and sleep under your roof.

Cyrano. A hundred, did you say?—You shall sleep at home!

Lignière [frightened]. But . . .

Cyrano [in a terrible voice, pointing to the lighted lantern which the DOORKEEPER stands swinging as he listens to this scene]. Take that lantern [*LIGNIÈRE* hurriedly takes it] and walk! . . . I swear to tuck you in your bed to-night myself. (*To the OFFICERS.*) You, follow at a distance. You may look on!

Crügu. But a hundred men . . .

Cyrano. Are not one man too many for my mood to-night!

[*The players, in their several costumes, have stepped down from the stage and come nearer.*]

Le Bret. But why take under your especial care . . .

Cyrano. Still *Le Bret* is not satisfied!

Le Bret. That most commonplace of sots?

Cyrano [slapping *LIGNIÈRE* on the shoulder]. Because this sot, this cask of muscatel, this hogshead of rosolio, did once upon a time a wholly pretty thing. On leaving Mass, having seen her whom he loved take holy-water, as the rite prescribes, he whom the sight of water puts to flight, ran to the holy-water bowl, and stooping over, drank it dry. . . .

An Actress [in the costume of soubrette]. *Tiens*, that was nice!

Cyrano. Was it not, soubrette?

The Soubrette [to the others]. But why are they, a hundred, all against one poor poet?

Cyrano. Let us start! [*To the OFFICERS.*] And you, gentlemen, when you see me attack, whatever you may suppose to be my danger, do not stir to second me!

Another of the Actresses [jumping from the stage]. Oh, I will not miss seeing this!

Cyrano. Come!

Another Actress [likewise jumping from the stage, to an elderly actor]. *Cassandre*, will you not come?

Cyrano. Come, all of you! The Doctor,

Isabel, *Leander*, all! and you shall lend, charming fantastic swarm, an air of Italian farce to the Spanish drama in view. Yes, you shall be a tinkling heard above a roar, like bells about a tambourine!

All the Women [in great glee]. Bravo! . . . Hurry! . . . A mantle! . . . A hood!

Jodelet. Let us go!

Cyrano [to the fiddlers]. You will favor us with a tune, messieurs the violinists!

[*The fiddlers fall into the train.*]

The lighted candles which furnished the footlights are seized and distributed. The procession becomes a torchlight procession.]

Cyrano. Bravo! Officers, beauty in fancy dress, and, twenty steps ahead . . . [*he takes the position he describes.*] I, by myself, under the feather stuck, with her own hand, by *Glory*, in my hat! Proud as a *Scipio* trebly *Nasica*!—It is understood? Formal interdiction to interfere with me!—We are ready? One! Two! Three! Door-keeper, open the door!

[*The DOORKEEPER opens wide the folding door. A picturesque corner of Old Paris appears, bathed in moonlight.*]

Cyrano. Ah! . . . Paris floats in dim nocturnal mist. . . . The sloping blueish roofs are washed with moonlight. . . . A setting, exquisite indeed, offers itself for the scene about to be enacted. . . . Yonder, under silvery vapor wreathes, like a mysterious magic mirror, glimmers the *Seine*. . . . And you shall see what you shall see!

All. To the *Porte de Nesle*!

Cyrano [standing on the threshold]. To the *Porte de Nesle*! [*Before crossing it, he turns to the SOUBRETTE.*] Were you not asking, mademoiselle, why upon that solitary rhymster a hundred men were set? [*He draws his sword, and tranquilly.*] Because it was well known he is a friend of mine! [*Exit.*]

[*To the sound of the violins, by the flickering light of the candles, the procession—LIGNIÈRE staggering at the head, the ACTRESSES arm in arm with the OFFICERS, the players capering behind,—follows out into the night.*]

ACT TWO

THE COOKSHOP OF POETS

RAGUENEAU'S shop, vast kitchen at the corner of Rue St. Honoré and Rue de l'Arbre-Sec, which can be seen at the back, through the glass door, gray in the early dawn.

At the left, in front, a counter overhung by a wrought-iron canopy from which geese, ducks, white peacocks are hanging. In large china jars, tall nosegays composed of the simpler flowers, mainly sunflowers. On the same side, in the middle distance, an enormous fireplace, in front of which, between huge andirons, each of which supports a small iron pot, roasting meats drip into appropriate pans.

At the right, door in the front wing. In the middle distance, a staircase leading to a loft, the interior of which is seen through open shutters; a spread table lighted by a small Flemish candelabrum, shows it to be an eating-room. A wooden gallery continuing the stairway, suggests other similar rooms to which it may lead.

In the centre of the shop, an iron hoop—which can be lowered by means of a rope,—to which large roasts are hooked.

In the shadow, under the stairway, ovens are glowing. Copper molds and saucepans are shining; spits turning, hams swinging, pastry pyramids showing fair. It is the early beginning of the workday. Bustling of hurried scullions, portly cooks and young cook's-assistants; swarming of caps decorated with hen feathers and guinea-fowl wings. Wicker crates and broad sheets of tin are brought in loaded with brioches and tarts.

There are tables covered with meats and cakes; others, surrounded by chairs, await customers. In a corner, a smaller table, littered with papers. At the rise of the curtain, RAGUENEAU is discovered seated at this table, writing with an inspired air, and counting upon his fingers.

First Pastrycook [bringing in a tall molded pudding]. Nougat of fruit!

Second Pastrycook [bringing in the dish he names]. Custard!

Third Pastrycook [bringing in a fowl roasted in its feathers]. Peacock!

Fourth Pastrycook [bringing in a tray of cakes]. Mince-pies!

Fifth Pastrycook [bringing in a deep earthen dish]. Beef stew!

Ragueneau [laying down his pen, and looking up]. Daybreak already plates with silver the copper pans! Time, Ragueneau, to smother within thee the singing divinity! The hour of the lute will come anon—now is that of the ladle! [He rises; speaking to one of the cooks.] You, sir, be so good as to lengthen this gravy,—it is too thick!

The Cook. How much?

Ragueneau. Three feet. [Goes farther.]

The Cook. What does he mean?

First Pastrycook. Let me have the tart!

Second Pastrycook. The dumpling!

Ragueneau [standing before the fireplace]. Spread thy wings, Muse, and fly further, that thy lovely eyes may not be reddened at the sordid kitchen fire! [To one of the cooks, pointing at some small loaves of bread.] You have improperly placed the cleft in those loaves; the cæsura belongs in the middle,—between the hemistichs! [To another of the Cooks, pointing at an unfinished pastry.] This pastry palace requires a roof! [To a young cook's apprentice, who, seated upon the floor, is putting fowls on a spit.] And you, on that long spit, arrange, my son, in pleasing alternation, the modest pullet and the splendid turkey-cock,—even as our wise Malherbe alternated of old the greater with the lesser lines, and so with roasted fowls compose a poem!

Another Apprentice [coming forward with a platter covered by a napkin]. Master, in your honor, see what I have baked. . . . I hope you are pleased with it!

Ragueneau [ecstatic]. A lyre!

The Apprentice. Of pie-crust!

Ragueneau [touched]. With candied fruits!

The Apprentice. And the strings, see,—of spun sugar!

Ragueneau [giving him money]. Go, drink my health! [Catching sight of LISE who is entering.] Hush! My wife! . . . Move on, and hide that money. [To LISE, showing her the lyre, with a constrained air.] Fine, is it not?

Lise. Ridiculous! [She sets a pile of wrapping-paper on the counter.]

Ragueneau. Paper bags? Good. Thanks. [He examines them.] Heavens! My beloved books! The masterpieces of my friends,—dismembered,—torn!—to fashion paper bags for penny pies!—Ah, the abominable case is re-enacted of Orpheus and the Mænads!

Lise [drily]. And have I not an unquestionable right to make what use I can of the sole payment ever got from your paltry scribblers of uneven lines?

Ragueneau. Pismire! Forbear to insult those divine, melodious crickets!

Lise. Before frequenting that low crew, my friend, you did not use to call me a Mænad,—no, nor yet a pismire!

Ragueneau. Put poems to such a use!

Lise. To that use and no other!

Ragueneau. If with poems you do this, I should like to know, Madame, what you do with prose!

[Two children have come into the shop.]

Ragueneau. What can I do for you, little ones?

First Child. Three patties.

Ragueneau [waiting on them]. There you are! Beautifully browned, and piping hot.

Second Child. Please, will you wrap them for us?

Ragueneau [starting, aside]. There goes one of my bags! [To the children.] You want them wrapped, do you? [He takes one of the paper bags, and as he is about to put in the patties, reads.] "No otherwise, Ulysses, from Penelope departing. . . ." Not this one! [He lays it aside and takes another. At the moment of putting in the patties, he reads.] "Phœbus of the aureate locks . . ." Not that one! [Same business.]

Lise [out of patience]. Well, what are you waiting for?

Ragueneau. Here we are. Here we are. Here we are. [He takes a third bag and resigns himself.] The sonnet to Phyllis! . . . It is hard, all the same.

Lise. It is lucky you made up your mind. [Shrugging her shoulders.] Nicodemus!

[She climbs on a chair and arranges dishes on a side-board.]

Ragueneau [taking advantage of her back

being turned, calls back the children who had already reached the door]. Psst! . . . Children! Give me back the sonnet to Phyllis, and you shall have six patties instead of three! [The children give back the paper-bag, joyfully take the patties and exult. RAGUENEAU smooths out the crumpled paper and reads declaiming.] "Phyllis!" . . . Upon that charming name, a grease-spot! . . . "Phyllis!" . . .

[Enter CYRANO brusquely.]

Cyrano. What time is it?

Ragueneau [bowing with eager deference]. Six o'clock.

Cyrano [with emotion]. In an hour! [He comes and goes in the shop.]

Ragueneau [following him]. Bravo! I too was witness . . .

Cyrano. Of what?

Ragueneau. Your fight.

Cyrano. Which?

Ragueneau. At the Hotel de Bourgogne.

Cyrano [with disdain]. Ah, the duel!

Ragueneau [admiringly]. Yes,—the duel in rhyme.

Lise. He can talk of nothing else.

Cyrano. Let him! . . . It does no harm.

Ragueneau [thrusting with a spit he has seized]. "At the last line, I hit!" "At the last line I hit!"—How fine that is! [With growing enthusiasm.] "At the last line, I"—

Cyrano. What time, Ragueneau?

Ragueneau [remaining fixed in the attitude of thrusting, while he looks at the clock]. Five minutes past six.—"I hit!" [He recovers from his duelling posture.] Oh, to be able to make a ballade!

Lise [to CYRANO, who in passing her counter has absently shaken hands with her]. What ails your hand?

Cyrano. Nothing. A scratch.

Ragueneau. You have been exposed to some danger?

Cyrano. None whatever.

Lise [shaking her finger at him]. I fear that is a fib!

Cyrano. From the swelling of my nose? The fib in that case must have been good-sized. . . . [In a different tone.] I am expecting some one. You will leave us alone in here.

Ragueneau. But how can I contrive it? My poets shortly will be coming . . .

Lise [ironically]. For breakfast!

Cyrano. When I sign to you, you will clear the place of them.—What time is it?

Ragueneau. It is ten minutes past six.

Cyrano [seating himself nervously at RAGUENEAU'S table and helping himself to paper]: A pen?

Ragueneau [taking one from behind his ear, and offering it]. A swan's quill.

A Mousquetaire [with enormous moustachios, enters; in a stentorian voice]. Good-morning!

[*LISE* goes hurriedly to him, toward the back.]

Cyrano [turning]. What is it?

Ragueneau. A friend of my wife's,—a warrior,—terrible, from his own report.

Cyrano [taking up the pen again, and waving RAGUENEAU away]. Hush! . . . [To himself.] Write to her, . . . fold the letter, . . . hand it to her, . . . and make my escape. . . . [Throwing down the pen.] Coward! . . . But may I perish if I have the courage to speak to her, . . . to say a single word. . . . [To RAGUENEAU.] What time is it?

RAGUENEAU. A quarter past six.

Cyrano [beating his breast]. A single word of all I carry here! . . . Whereas in writing . . . [He takes up the pen again.] Come, let us write it then, in very deed, the love-letter I have written in thought so many times, I have but to lay my soul beside my paper, and copy! [He writes.]

[Beyond the glass door, shadowy lank hesitating shabby forms are seen moving.]

[Enter the POETS, clad in black, with hanging hose, sadly mud-splashed.]

Lise [coming forward, to RAGUENEAU]. Here they come, your scarecrows!

First Poet [entering, to RAGUENEAU]. Brother in art! . . .

Second Poet [shaking both RAGUENEAU'S hands]. Dear fellow-bard. . . .

Third Poet. Eagle of pastrycooks, [sniffs the air], your eyrie smells divine!

Fourth Poet. Phoebus turned baker!

Fifth Poet. Apollo master-cook!

Ragueneau [surrounded, embraced, shaken by the hand]. How at his ease a man feels at once with them!

First Poet. The reason we are late, is the crowd at the Porte de Nesle!

Second Poet. Eight ugly ruffians, ripped

open with the sword, lie weltering on the pavement.

Cyrano [raising his head a second]. Eight? I thought there were only seven. [Goes on with his letter.]

Ragueneau [to CYRANO]. Do you happen to know who is the hero of this event?

Cyrano [negligently]. I? . . . No.

Lise [to the MOUSQUETAIRE]. Do you?

The Mousquetaire [turning up the ends of his moustache]. Possibly!

Cyrano [writing; from time to time he is heard murmuring a word or two]. . . . "I love you . . ."

First Poet. A single man, we were told, put a whole gang to flight!

Second Poet. Oh, it was a rare sight! The ground was littered with pikes, and cudgels . . .

Cyrano [writing]. . . . "Your eyes . . ."

Third Poet. Hats were strewn as far as the Goldsmiths' square!

First Poet. Sapristi! He must have been a madman of mettle. . . .

Cyrano [as above]. ". . . your lips . . ."

First Poet. An infuriate giant, the doer of that deed!

Cyrano [same business]. ". . . but when I see you, I come near to swooning with a tender dread . . ."

Second Poet [snapping up a tart]. What have you lately written, Ragueneau?

Cyrano [same business]. ". . . who loves you devotedly . . ." [In the act of signing the letter, he stops, rises, and tucks it inside his doublet.] No need to sign it. I deliver it myself.

Ragueneau [to SECOND POET]. I have rhymed a recipe.

Third Poet [establishing himself beside a tray of cream puffs]. Let us hear this recipe!

Fourth Poet [examining a brioche of which he has possessed himself]. It should not wear its cap so saucily on one side . . . it scarcely looks well! . . . [Bites off the top.]

First Poet. See, the spice-cake there, ogling a susceptible poet with eyes of almond under citron brows! . . . [He takes the spice cake.]

Second Poet. We are listening!

Third Poet [slightly squeezing a cream puff between his fingers]. This puff creams at the mouth. . . . I water!

Second Poet [taking a bite out of the large pastry lyre]. For once the Lyre will have filled my stomach!

Ragueneau [who has made ready to recite, has coughed, adjusted his cap, struck an attitude]. A recipe in rhyme!

Second Poet [to FIRST POET, nudging him]. Is it breakfast, with you?

First Poet [to SECOND POET]. And with you, is it dinner?

Ragueneau. How Almond Cheese-Cakes should be made.

Briskly beat to lightness due,

Eggs, a few;

With the eggs so beaten, beat—

Nicely strained for this same use,—

Lemon-juice,

Adding milk of almonds, sweet.

With fine pastry dough, rolled flat,

After that,

Line each little scalloped mold;

Round the sides, light-fingered, spread

Marmalade;

Pour the liquid eggy gold,

Into each delicious pit;

Prison it

In the oven,—and, bye and bye,

Almond cheese-cakes will in gay

Blond array

Bless your nostril and your eye!

The Poets [their mouths full]. Exquisite!
... Delicious!

One of the Poets [choking]. Humph!

[They go toward the back, eating.

CYRANO, who has been watching them, approaches *RAGUENEAU*.]

Cyrano. While you recite your works to them, have you a notion how they stuff?

Ragueneau [low, with a smile]. Yes, I see them ... without looking, lest they should be abashed. I get a double pleasure thus from saying my verses over: I satisfy a harmless weakness of which I stand convicted, at the same time as giving those who have not fed a needed chance to feed!

Cyrano [slapping him on the shoulder]. You, ... I like you! [*RAGUENEAU* joins his friends. *CYRANO* looks after him; then, somewhat sharply.] Hey, Lise! [*LISE*, absorbed in tender conversation with the

MOUSQUETAIRE, starts and comes forward toward *CYRANO*.] Is that captain ... laying siege to you?

Lise [offended]. My eyes, sir, have ever held in respect those who meant hurt to my character. ...

Cyrano. For eyes so resolute ... I thought yours looked a little languishing!

Lise [choking with anger]. But ...

Cyrano [bluntly]. I like your husband. Wherefore, Madame Lise, I say he shall not be so ... horned!

Lise. But ...

Cyrano [raising his voice so as to be heard by the *MOUSQUETAIRE*]. A word to the wise! [He bows to the *MOUSQUETAIRE*, and after looking at the clock, goes to the door at the back and stands in watch.]

Lise [to the *MOUSQUETAIRE*, who has simply returned *CYRANO*'s bow]. Really ... I am astonished at you. ... Defy him ... to his face!

The Mousquetaire. To his face, indeed! ... to his face! ... [He quickly moves off. *LISE* follows him.]

Cyrano [from the door at the back, signalling to *RAGUENEAU* that he should clear the room]. Pst! ...

Ragueneau [urging the *POETS* toward the door at the right]. We shall be much more comfortable in there. ...

Cyrano [impatiently]. Pst! ... Pst! ...

Ragueneau [driving along the *POETS*]. I want to read you a little thing of mine. ...

First Poet [despairingly, his mouth full]. But the provisions. ...

Second Poet. Shall not be parted from us!

[They follow *RAGUENEAU* in procession, after making a raid on the eatables.]

Cyrano. If I feel that there is so much as a glimmer of hope ... I will out with my letter! ...

[*ROXANE*, masked, appears behind the glass door, followed by the *DUENNA*.]

Cyrano [instantly opening the door]. Welcome! [Approaching the *DUENNA*.] Madame, a word with you!

The Duenna. A dozen.

Cyrano. Are you fond of sweets?

The Duenna. To the point of indigestion!

Cyrano [snatching some paper bags off

the counter]. Good. Here are two sonnets of Benserade's . . .

The Duenna. Pooh!

Cyrano. Which I fill for you with grated almond drops.

The Duenna [with a different expression]. Ha!

Cyrano. Do you look with favor upon the cake they call a trifle?

The Duenna. I affect it out of measure, when it has whipped cream inside.

Cyrano. Six shall be yours, thrown in with a poem by Saint-Amant. And in these verses of Chapelain I place this wedge of fruit-cake, light by the side of them. . . . Oh! And do you like tarts . . . little jam ones . . . fresh?

The Duenna. I dream of them at night!

Cyrano [loading her arms with crammed paper bags]. Do me the favor to go and eat these in the street.

The Duenna. But . . .

Cyrano [pushing her out]. And do not come back till you have finished! [He closes the door upon her, comes forward toward ROXANE, and stands, bareheaded, at a respectful distance.] Blessed forevermore among all hours the hour in which, remembering that so lowly a being still draws breath, you were so gracious as to come to tell me . . . to tell me? . . .

Roxane [who has removed her mask]. First of all, that I thank you. For that churl, that coxcomb yesterday, whom you taught manners with your sword, is the one whom a great nobleman, who fancies himself in love with me . . .

Cyrano. De Guiche?

Roxane [dropping her eyes]. Has tried to force upon me as a husband.

Cyrano. Honorary? [Bowing.] It appears, then, that I fought, and I am glad of it, not for my graceless nose but your thrice-beautiful eyes.

Roxane. Further than that . . . I wished . . . But before I can make the confession I have in mind to make, I must find in you once more the . . . almost brother, with whom as a child I used to play, in the park—do you remember?—by the lake!

Cyrano. I have not forgotten. Yes . . . you came every summer to Bergerac.

Roxane. You used to fashion lances out of reeds . . .

Cyrano. The silk of the tasselled corn furnished hair for your doll . . .

Roxane. It was the time of long delightful games . . .

Cyrano. And somewhat sour berries . . .

Roxane. The time when you did everything I bade you!

Cyrano. Roxane, wearing short frocks, was known as Magdeleine.

Roxane. Was I pretty in those days?

Cyrano. You were not ill-looking.

Roxane. Sometimes, in your venture—some climbings you used to hurt yourself. You would come running to me, your hand bleeding. And, playing at being your mamma, I would harden my voice and say . . . [She takes his hand.] "Will you never keep out of mischief?" [She stops short, amazed.] Oh, it is too much! Here you have done it again! [CYRANO tries to draw back his hand.] No! Let me look at it! . . . Aren't you ashamed? A great boy like you! . . . How did this happen, and where?

Cyrano. Oh, fun . . . near the Porte de Nesle.

Roxane [sitting down at a table and dipping her handkerchief into a glass of water]. Let me have it.

Cyrano [sitting down too]. So prettily, so cheeringly maternal!

Roxane. And tell me, while I wash this naughty blood away . . . with how many were you fighting?

Cyrano. Oh, not quite a hundred.

Roxane. Tell me about it.

Cyrano. No. What does it matter? You tell me, you . . . what you were going to tell me before, and did not dare . . .

Roxane [without releasing his hand]. I do dare, now. I have breathed in courage with the perfume of the past. Oh, yes, now I dare. Here it is. There is some one whom I love.

Cyrano. Ah! . . .

Roxane. Oh, he does not know it.

Cyrano. Ah! . . .

Roxane. As yet. . . .

Cyrano. Ah! . . .

Roxane. But if he does not know it, he soon will.

Cyrano. Ah! . . .

Roxane. A poor boy who until now has loved me timidly, from a distance, without daring to speak. . . .

Cyrano. Ah! . . .

Roxane. No, leave me your hand. It is hot, this will cool it. . . . But I have read his heart in his face.

Cyrano. Ah! . . .

Roxane [*completing the bandaging of his hand with her small pocket-handkerchief*]. And, cousin, is it not a strange coincidence—that he should serve exactly in your regiment!

Cyrano. Ah! . . .

Roxane [*laughing*]. Yes. He is a cadet, in the same company!

Cyrano. Ah! . . .

Roxane. He bears plain on his forehead the stamp of wit, of genius! He is proud, noble, young, brave; handsome. . . .

Cyrano [*rising, pale*]. Handsome! . . .

Roxane. What . . . what is the matter?

Cyrano. With me? . . . Nothing! . . . It is . . . it is . . . [*Showing his hand, smiling*]. You know! . . . It smarts a little . . .

Roxane. In short, I love him. I must tell you, however, that I have never seen him save at the play.

Cyrano. Then you have never spoken to each other?

Roxane. Only with our eyes.

Cyrano. But, then . . . how can you know? . . .

Roxane. Oh, under the lindens of Place Royale, people will talk. A trustworthy gossip told me many things!

Cyrano. A cadet, did you say?

Roxane. A cadet, in your company.

Cyrano. His name?

Roxane. Baron Christian de Neuville.

Cyrano. What? He is not in the cadets.

Roxane. He is! He certainly is, since morning. Captain Carbon de Castel-Jaloux.

Cyrano. And quickly, quickly, she throws away her heart! . . . But my poor little girl . . .

The Duenna [*opening the door at the back*]. Monsieur de Bergerac, I have eaten them, every one!

Cyrano. Now read the poetry printed upon the bags! [*The DUENNA disappears*]. My poor child, you who can endure none but the choicest language, who savor eloquence and wit, . . . if he should be a barbarian!

Roxane. No! no! . . . He has hair like one of D'Urfé's heroes!

Cyrano. If he had on proof as homely a wit as he has pretty hair!

Roxane. No! No! . . . I can see at a single glance, his utterances are fine, pointed . . .

Cyrano. Ah, yes! A man's utterances are invariably like his moustache! . . . Still, if he *were* a ninny? . . .

Roxane [*stamping with her foot*]. I should die, there!

Cyrano [*after a time*]. You bade me come here that you might tell me this? I scarcely see the appropriateness, madame.

Roxane. Ah, it was because some one yesterday let death into my soul by telling me that in your company you are all Gascons, . . . all!

Cyrano. And that we pick a quarrel with every impudent fledgling, not Gascon, admitted by favor to our thoroughbred Gascon ranks? That is what you heard?

Roxane. Yes, and you can imagine how distracted I am for him!

Cyrano [*in his teeth*]. You well may be!

Roxane. But I thought, yesterday, when you towered up, great and invincible, giving his due to that miscreant, standing your ground against those caitiffs, I thought "Were he but willing, he of whom all are in awe . . ."

Cyrano. Very well, I will protect your little baron.

Roxane. Ah, you will . . . you will protect him for me? . . . I have always felt for you the tenderest regard!

Cyrano. Yes, yes.

Roxane. You will be his friend?

Cyrano. I will!

Roxane. And never shall he have to fight a duel?

Cyrano. I swear it.

Roxane. Oh, I quite love you! . . . Now I must go. [*She hurriedly resumes her mask, throws a veil over her head; says absentmindedly*]. But you have not yet told me about last night's encounter. It must have been amazing! . . . Tell him to write to me. [*She kisses her hand to him*]. I love you dearly!

Cyrano. Yes, yes.

Roxane. A hundred men against you? . . . Well, adieu. We are fast friends.

Cyrano. Yes, yes.

Roxane. Tell him to write me! . . . A hundred men! You shall tell me another

time. I must not linger now . . . A hundred men! What a heroic thing to do!

Cyrano [bowing]. Oh, I have done better since!

[*Exit ROXANE. CYRANO stands motionless, staring at the ground. Silence. The door at the right opens. RAGUENEAU thrusts in his head.*]

Ragueneau. May we come back?

Cyrano [without moving]. Yes . . .

[*RAGUENEAU beckons, his friends come in again. At the same time, in the doorway at the back, appears CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX, costume of a Captain of the Guards. On seeing CYRANO, he gesticulates exaggeratedly by way of signal to some one out of sight.*]

Carbon de Castel-Jaloux. He is here!

Cyrano [looking up]. Captain!

Carbon de Castel-Jaloux [exultant]. Hero! We know all! . . . About thirty of my cadets are out there! . . .

Cyrano [drawing back]. But . . .

Carbon de Castel-Jaloux [trying to lead him off]. Come! . . . You are in request!

Cyrano. No!

Carbon de Castel-Jaloux. They are drinking across the way, at the Cross of the Hilt.

Cyrano. I . . .

Carbon de Castel-Jaloux [going to the door and shouting toward the street corner, in a voice of thunder]. The hero refuses. He is not in the humor!

A Voice [outside]. Ah, sandious! . . .

[*Tumult outside, noise of clanking swords and of boots drawing nearer.*]

Carbon de Castel-Jaloux [rubbing his hands]. Here they come, across the street. . . .

The Cadets [entering the cookshop]. Mille dious! . . . Capdedious! . . . Mordious! . . . Pocapedious! . . .

Ragueneau [backing in alarm]. Messieurs, are you all natives of Gascony?

The Cadets. All!

One of the Cadets [to CYRANO]. Bravo!

Cyrano. Baron!

Other Cadet [shaking both CYRANO's hands]. Vivat!

Cyrano. Baron!

Third Cadet. Let me hug you to my heart!

Cyrano. Baron!

Several Gascons. Let us hug him!

Cyrano [not knowing which one to answer]. Baron! . . . baron! . . . your pardon!

Ragueneau. Messieurs, are you all barons?

The Cadets. All!

Ragueneau. Are they truly?

First Cadet. Our coats of arms piled up would dwindle in the clouds!

Le Bret [entering, running to CYRANO]. They are looking for you! A crowd, gone mad as March, led by those who were with you last night.

Cyrano [alarmed]. You never told them where to find me? . . .

Le Bret [rubbing his hands]. I did.

A Burgher [entering, followed by a number of others]. Monsieur, the Marais is coming in a body!

[*The street outside has filled with people. Sedan-chairs, coaches stop before the door.*]

Le Bret [smiling, low to CYRANO]. And Roxane?

Cyrano [quickly]. Be quiet!

The Crowd [outside]. Cyrano!

[*A rabble bursts into the cookshop. Confusion. Shouting.*]

Ragueneau [standing upon a table]. My shop is invaded! They are breaking everything! It is glorious!

People [pressing round CYRANO]. My friend . . . my friend. . . .

Cyrano. I had not so many friends . . . yesterday!

Le Bret. This is success!

A Young Marquis [running toward CYRANO, with outstretched hands]. If you knew, my dear fellow . . .

Cyrano. Dear? . . . Fellow? . . . Where was it we stood sentinel together?

Other Marquis. I wish to present you, sir, to several ladies, who are outside in my coach. . . .

Cyrano [coldly]. But you, to me, by whom will you first be presented?

Le Bret [astonished]. But what is the matter with you?

Cyrano. Be still!

A Man of Letters [with an inkhorn]. Will you kindly favor me with the details of . . .

Cyrano. No.

Le Bret [nudging him]. That is Theophrastus Renaudot, the inventor of the gazette.

Cyrano. Enough!

Le Bret. A sheet close packed with various information! It is an idea, they say, likely to take firm root and flourish!

A Poet [coming forward]. Monsieur . . .

Cyrano. Another!

The Poet. I am anxious to make a pentacrostic on your name.

Somebody Else [likewise approaching CYRANO]. Monsieur . . .

Cyrano. Enough, I say!

[At the gesture of impatience which CYRANO cannot repress, the crowd draws away.]

[DE GUICHE appears, escorted by officers; among them CUIGY, BRISSAILLE, those who followed CYRANO at the end of the first act. CUIGY hurries toward CYRANO.]

Cuigy [to CYRANO]. Monsieur de Guiche! [Murmurs. Every one draws back.] He comes at the request of the Marshal de Gausson.

De Guiche [bowing to CYRANO]. Who wishes to express his admiration for your latest exploit, the fame of which has reached him.

The Crowd. Bravo!

Cyrano [bowing]. The Marshal is qualified to judge of courage.

De Guiche. He would scarcely have believed the report, had these gentlemen not been able to swear they had seen the deed performed.

Cuigy. With our own eyes!

Le Bret [low to CYRANO, who wears an abstracted air]. But . . .

Cyrano. Be silent!

Le Bret. You appear to be suffering . . .

Cyrano [starting, and straightening himself]. Before these people? . . . [His moustache bristles; he expands his chest.] I . . . suffering? . . . You shall see!

De Guiche [in whose ear CUIGY has been whispering]. But this is by no means the first gallant achievement marking your career. You serve in the madcap Gascon company, do you not?

Cyrano. In the cadets, yes.

One of the Cadets [in a great voice]. Among his countrymen!

De Guiche [considering the GASCONS, in line behind CYRANO]. Ah, ha! — All these gentlemen, then, of the formidable aspect, are the famous . . .

Carbon de Castel-Jaloux. Cyrano!

Cyrano. Captain? . . .

Carbon de Castel-Jaloux. My company, I believe, is here in total. Be so obliging as to present it to the Count.

Cyrano [taking a step toward DE GUICHE, and pointing at the CADETS].

They are the Gascony Cadets
Of Carbon de Castel-Jaloux;
Famed fighters, liars, desperates,
They are the Gascony Cadets!
All, better-born than pickpockets,
Talk couchant, rampant, . . . pendent, too!
They are the Gascony Cadets
Of Carbon de Castel-Jaloux!

Cat-whiskered, eyed like falconets,
Wolf-toothed and heron-legged, they hew
The rabble down that snarls and threatens . . .
Cat-whiskered, eyed like falconets,
Great pomp of plume hides and offsets
Holes in those hats they wear askew . . .
Cat-whiskered, eyed like falconets,
They drive the snarling mob, and hew!

The mildest of their sobriquets
Are Crack-my-crown and Run-me-through.
Mad drunk on glory Gascon gets!
These boasters of soft sobriquets
Wherever rapier rapier whets
Are met in punctual rendezvous. . . .
The mildest of their sobriquets
Are Crack-my-crown and Run-me-through!

They are the Gascony Cadets
That give the jealous spouse his due!
Lean forth, adorable coquettes,
They are the Gascony Cadets,
With plumes and scarfs and aigulets!
The husband gray may well look blue. . . .
They are the Gascony Cadets
That give the jealous spouse his due!

De Guiche [nonchalantly seated in an armchair which RAGUENEAU has hurriedly brought for him]. A gentleman provides himself to-day, by way of luxury, with a poet. May I look upon you as mine?

Cyrano. No, your lordship, as nobody's.

De Guiche. My uncle Richelieu yester-

day found your spontaneity diverting. I shall be pleased to be of use to you with him.

Le Bret [dazzled]. Great God!

De Guiche. I cannot think I am wrong in supposing that you have rhymed a tragedy?

Le Bret [whispering to CYRANO]. My boy, your Agrippina will be played!

De Guiche. Take it to him. . . .

Cyrano [tempted and pleased]. Really.

De Guiche. He has taste in such matters. He will no more than, here and there, alter a word, recast a passage. . . .

Cyrano [whose face has instantly darkened]. Not to be considered, monsieur! My blood runs cold at the thought of a single comma added or suppressed.

De Guiche. On the other hand, my dear sir, when a verse finds favor with him, he pays for it handsomely.

Cyrano. He scarcely can pay me as I pay myself, when I have achieved a verse to my liking, by singing it over to myself!

De Guiche. You are proud.

Cyrano. You have observed it?

One of the Cadets [coming in with a number of disreputable, draggled, tattered hats threaded on his sword]. Look, Cyrano! at the remarkable feathered game we secured this morning near the Porte de Nesle! The hats of the fugitives!

Carbon de Castel-Jaloux. *Spoliæ opimæ!*

All [laughing]. Ha! Ha! Ha! . . .

Cuigy. The one who planned that military action, my word! must be proud of it to-day!

Brissaille. Is it known who did it?

De Guiche. I—[The laughter stops short.] They had instructions to chastise—a matter one does not attend to in person,—a drunken scribbler.

[Constrained silence.]

The Cadet [under breath, to CYRANO, indicating the hats]. What can we do with them? They are oily. . . . Make them into a hotch pot?

Cyrano [taking the sword with the hats, and bowing, as he shakes them off at DE GUICHE'S feet]. Monsieur, if you should care to return them to your friends? . . .

De Guiche [rises, and in a curt tone]. My chair and bearers, at once. [To CYRANO, violently.] As for you, sir . . .

A Voice [in the street, shouting]. The chairmen of Monseigneur the Comte de Guiche!

De Guiche [who has recovered control over himself, with a smile]. Have you read Don Quixote?

Cyrano. I have. And at the name of that divine madman, I uncover. . . .

De Guiche. My advice to you is to ponder. . . .

A Chairman [appearing at the back]. The chair is at the door!

De Guiche. The chapter of the wind mills.

Cyrano [bowing]. Chapter thirteen.

De Guiche. For when a man attacks them, it often happens. . . .

Cyrano. I have attacked, am I to infer, a thing that veers with every wind?

De Guiche. That one of their far-reaching canvas arms pitches him down into the mud!

Cyrano. Or up among the stars!

[Exit DE GUICHE. He is seen getting into his chair. The gentlemen withdraw whispering. LE BRET goes to the door with them. The crowd leaves. The CADETS remain seated at the right and left at tables where food and drink is brought to them.]

Cyrano [bowing with a derisive air to those who leave without daring to take leave of him]. Gentlemen . . . gentlemen . . . gentlemen. . . .

Le Bret [coming forward, greatly distressed, lifting his hands to Heaven]. Oh, in what a pretty pair of shoes. . . .

Cyrano. Oh, you! . . . I expect you to grumble!

Le Bret. But yourself, you will agree with me that invariably to cut the throat of opportunity becomes an exaggeration! . . .

Cyrano. Yes. I agree. I do exaggerate.

Le Bret [triumphant]. You see, you admit it! . . .

Cyrano. But for the sake of principle, and of example, as well, I think it a good thing to exaggerate as I do!

Le Bret. Could you but leave apart, once in a while, your mousquetaire of a soul, fortune, undoubtedly, fame. . . .

Cyrano. And what should a man do? Seek some grandee, take him for patron, and like the obscure creeper clasping a

tree-trunk, and licking the bark of that which props it up, attain to height by craft instead of strength? No, I thank you. Dedicate, as they all do, poems to financiers? Wear motley in the humble hope of seeing the lips of a minister distend for once in a smile not ominous of ill? -No, I thank you. Eat every day a toad? Be threadbare at the belly with grovelling? Have his skin dirty soonest at the knees? Practice feats of dorsal elasticity? No, I thank you. With one hand stroke the goat while with the other he waters the cabbage? Make gifts of senna that counter-gifts of rhubarb may accrue, and indefatigably swing his censer in some beard? No, I thank you. Push himself from lap to lap, become a little great man in a great little circle, propel his ship with madrigals for oars and in his sails the sighs of the elderly ladies? No, I thank you. Get the good editor Sercy to print his verses at proper expense? No, I thank you. Contrive to be nominated Pope in conclaves held by imbeciles in wineshops? No, I thank you. Work to construct a name upon the basis of a sonnet, instead of constructing other sonnets? No, I thank you. Discover talent in tyros, and in them alone? Stand in terror of what gazettes may please to say, and say to himself, "At whatever cost, may I figure in the Paris Mercury!" No, I thank you. Calculate, cringe, peak, prefer making a call to a poem,—petition, solicit, apply? No, I thank you! No, I thank you! No, I thank you! But . . . sing, dream, laugh, loaf, be single, be free, have eyes that look squarely, a voice with a ring; wear, if he chooses, his hat hindside afore; for a yes, for a no, fight a duel or turn a ditty! . . . Work, without concern of fortune or of glory, to accomplish the heart's-desired journey to the moon! Put forth nothing that has not its spring in the very heart, yet, modest, say to himself, "Old man, be satisfied with blossoms, fruits, yea, leaves alone, so they be gathered in your garden and not another man's!" Then, if it happen that to some small extent he triumph, be obliged to render of the glory, to Cæsar, not one jot, but honestly appropriate it all. In short, scorning to be the parasite, the creeper, if even failing to be the oak, rise, not perchance to a great height, . . . but rise alone!

Le Bret. Alone? Good! but not one against all! How the devil did you contract the mania that possesses you for making enemies, always, everywhere?

Cyrano. By seeing you make friends, and smile to those same flocks of friends with a mouth that takes for model an old purse! I wish not to be troubled to return bows in the street, and I exclaim with glee, "An enemy the more!"

Le Bret. This is mental aberration!

Cyrano. I do not dispute it. I am so framed. To displease is my pleasure. I love that one should hate me. Dear friend, if you but knew how much better a man walks under the exciting fire of hostile eyes, and how amused he may become over the spots on his doublet, spattered by Envy and Cowardice! . . . You, the facile friendship wherewith you surround yourself, resembles those wide Italian collars, loose and easy, with a perforated pattern, in which the neck looks like a woman's. They are more comfortable, but of less high effect; for the brow not held in proud position by any constraint from them, falls to nodding this way and that. . . . But for me every day Hatred starches and flutes the ruff whose stiffness holds the head well in place. Every new enemy is another plait in it, adding compulsion, but adding, as well, a ray: for, similar in every point to the Spanish ruff, Hatred is a bondage, . . . but is a halo, too!

Le Bret [after a pause, slipping his arm through CYRANO's]. To the hearing of all be proud and bitter, . . . but to me, below breath, say simply that she does not love you!

Cyrano [sharply]. Not a word!

[CHRISTIAN has come in and mingled with the CADETS; they ignore him; he has finally gone to a little table by himself, where LISE waits on him.]

One of the Cadets [seated at a table at the back, glass in hand]. Hey, Cyrano! [CYRANO turns toward him.] Your story!

Cyrano. Presently!

[He goes toward the back on LE BRET's arm. They talk low.]

The Cadet [rising and coming toward the front]. The account of your fight! It will be the best lesson [stopping in front of

the table at which CHRISTIAN is sitting] for this timorous novice!

Christian [looking up]. . . . Novice?

Other Cadet. Yes, sickly product of the North!

Christian. Sickly?

First Cadet [impressively]. Monsieur de Neuville, it is a good deed to warn you that there is a thing no more to be mentioned in our company than rope in the house of the hanged!

Christian. And what is it?

Other Cadet [in a terrifying voice]. Look at me! *[Three times, darkly, he places his finger upon his nose.]* You have understood?

Christian. Ah, it is the

Other Cadet. Silence! . . . Never must you so much as breathe that word, or . . . *[He points toward CYRANO at the back talking with LE BRET.]* You will have him, over there, to deal with!

Other Cadet [who while CHRISTIAN was turned toward the first, has noiselessly seated himself on the table behind him]. Two persons were lately cut off in their pride by him for talking through their noses. He thought it personal.

Other Cadet [in a cavernous voice, as he rises from under the table where he had slipped on all fours]. Not the remotest allusion, ever, to the fatal cartilage, . . . unless you fancy an early grave!

Other Cadet. A word will do the business! What did I say? . . . A word? . . . A simple gesture! Make use of your pocket-handkerchief, you will shortly have use for your shroud!

[Silence. All around CHRISTIAN watch him, with folded arms. He rises and goes to CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX, who, in conversation with an officer, affects to notice nothing.]

Christian. Captain!

Carbon [turning and looking him rather contemptuously up and down]. Monsieur?

Christian. What is the proper course for a man when he finds gentlemen of the South too boastful?

Carbon de Castel-Jaloux. He must prove to them that one can be of the North, yet brave. *[He turns his back upon him.]*

Christian. I am much obliged.

First Cadet [to CYRANO]. And now, the tale of your adventure!

All. Yes, yes, now let us hear!

Cyrano [coming forward among them]. My adventure? *[All draw their stools nearer, and sit around him, with craned necks. CHRISTIAN sits astride a chair.]* Well, then, I was marching to meet them. The moon up in the skies was shining like a silver watch, when suddenly I know not what careful watch-maker having wrapped it in a cottony cloud, there occurred the blackest imaginable night; and, the streets being nowise lighted, — *mordious!* — you could see no further than . . .

Christian. Your nose.

[Silence. Every one slowly gets up; all look with terror at CYRANO. He has stopped short, amazed. Pause.]

Cyrano. Who is that man?

One of the Cadets [low]. He joined this morning.

Cyrano [taking a step toward CHRISTIAN]. This morning?

Carbon de Castel-Jaloux [low]. His name is Baron de Neuville . . .

Cyrano [stopping short]. Ah, very well. . . . *[He turns pale, then red, gives evidence of another impulse to throw himself upon CHRISTIAN.]* I . . . *[He conquers it and says in a stifled voice.]* Very well. *[He takes up his tale.]* As I was saying . . . *[with a burst of rage]* *Mordious!* . . . *[He continues in a natural tone]* one could not see in the very least. *[Consternation. All resume their seats, staring at one another.]* And I was walking along, reflecting that for a very insignificant rogue I was probably about to offend some great prince who would bear me a lasting grudge, that, in brief, I was about to thrust my . . .

Christian. Nose . . .

[All get up. CHRISTIAN has tilted his chair and is rocking on the hind legs.]

Cyrano [choking]. Finger . . . between the tree and the bark; for the aforesaid prince might be of sufficient power to trip me and throw me . . .

Christian. On my nose . . .

Cyrano [wipes the sweat from his brow]. But, said I, "Gascony forward! Never falter when duty prompts! Forward, Cyrano!" and, saying this, I advance —

when suddenly, in the darkness, I barely avoid a blow . . .

Christian. Upon the nose . . .

Cyrano. I ward it . . . and thereupon find myself . . .

Christian. Nose to nose . . .

Cyrano [*springing toward him*]. *Ventre-Saint-Gris!* . . . [*All the GASCONS rush forward, to see; CYRANO, on reaching CHRISTIAN, controls himself and proceeds*] . . . with a hundred drunken brawlers, smelling . . .

Christian. To the nose's limit . . .

Cyrano [*deathly pale, and smiling*] . . . of garlic and of grease. I leap forward, head lowered . . .

Christian. Nose to the wind! . . .

Cyrano. And I charge them. I knock two breathless and run a third through the body. One lets off at me: Paf! and I retort . . .

Christian. Pif!

Cyrano [*exploding*]. Death and damnation! Go,—all of you!

[*All the CADETS make for the door.*]

First Cadet. The tiger is roused at last!

Cyrano. All! and leave me with this man.

Second Cadet. *Bigre!* When we see him again, it will be in the shape of mince-meat!

Ragueneau. Mince-meat? . . .

Other Cadet. In one of your pies.

Ragueneau. I feel myself grow white and flabby as a table-napkin!

Carbon de Castel-Jaloux. Let us go!

Other Cadet. Not a smudge of him will be left!

Other Cadet. What these walls are about to behold gives me gooseflesh to think upon!

Other Cadet [*closing the door at the right*]. Ghastly! . . . Ghastly!

[*All have left, by the back or the sides, a few up the stairway. CYRANO and CHRISTIAN remain face to face, and look at each other a moment.*]

Cyrano. Embrace me!

Christian. Monsieur . . .

Cyrano. Brave fellow.

Christian. But what does this . . .

Cyrano. Very brave fellow. I wish you to.

Christian. Will you tell me? . . .

Cyrano. Embrace me, I am her brother.

Christian. Whose?

Cyrano. Hers!

Christian. What do you mean?

Cyrano. Roxane's!

Christian [*running to him*]. Heavens! You, her brother?

Cyrano. Or the same thing: her first cousin.

Christian. And she has . . .

Cyrano. Told me everything!

Christian. Does she love me?

Cyrano. Perhaps!

Christian [*seizing his hands*]. How happy I am, monsieur, to make your acquaintance! . . .

Cyrano. That is what I call a sudden sentiment!

Christian. Forgive me! . . .

Cyrano [*looking at him, laying his hand upon his shoulder*]. It is true that he is handsome, the rascal!

Christian. If you but knew, monsieur, how greatly I admire you! . . .

Cyrano. But all those noses which you . . .

Christian. I take them back!

Cyrano. Roxane expects a letter to-night . . .

Christian. Alas!

Cyrano. What is the matter?

Christian. I am lost if I cease to be dumb!

Cyrano. How is that?

Christian. Alas! I am such a dunce that I could kill myself for shame!

Cyrano. But no . . . no . . . You are surely not a dunce, if you believe you are! Besides, you scarcely attacked me like a dunce.

Christian. Oh, it is easy to find words in mounting to the assault! Indeed, I own to a certain cheap military readiness, but when I am before women, I have not a word to say. . . . Yet their eyes, when I pass by, express a kindness toward me . . .

Cyrano. And do their hearts not express the same when you stop beside them?

Christian. No! . . . for I am of those—I recognize it, and am dismayed!—who do not know how to talk of love.

Cyrano. *Tiens!* . . . It seems to me that if Nature had taken more pains with my shape, I should have been of those who do know how to talk of it.

Christian. Oh, to be able to express things gracefully!

Cyrano. Oh, to be a graceful little figure of a passing mousquetaire!

Christian. Roxane is a précieuse, . . . there is no chance but that I shall be a disillusion to Roxane!

Cyrano [*looking at CHRISTIAN*]. If I had, to express my soul, such an interpreter! . . .

Christian [*desperately*]. I ought to have eloquence! . . .

Cyrano [*abruptly*]. Eloquence I will lend you! . . . And you, to me, shall lend all-conquering physical charm . . . and between us we will compose a hero of romance!

Christian. What?

Cyrano. Should you be able to say, as your own, things which I day by day would teach you?

Christian. You are suggesting? . . .

Cyrano. Roxane shall not have disillusion! Tell me, shall we win her heart, we two as one will you submit to feel, transmitted from my leather doublet into your doublet stitched with silk, the soul I wish to share?

Christian. But Cyrano! . . .

Cyrano. Christian, will you?

Christian. You frighten me!

Cyrano. Since you fear, left to yourself, to chill her heart, will you consent,—and soon it will take fire, I vouch for it!—to contribute your lips to my phrases?

Christian. Your eyes shine! . . .

Cyrano. Will you?

Christian. What, would it please you so much?

Cyrano [*with rapture*]. It would . . . [*remembering, and confining himself to expressing an artistic pleasure*] . . . amuse me! It is an experiment fit surely to tempt a poet. Will you complete me, and let me in exchange complete you? We will walk side by side: you in full light, I in your shadow. . . . I will be wit to you . . . you, to me, shall be good looks!

Christian. But the letter, which should be sent to her without delay? . . . Never shall I be able . . .

Cyrano [*taking from his doublet the letter written in the first part of the act*]. The letter? Here it is!

Christian. How? . . .

Cyrano. It only wants the address.

Christian. I . . .

Cyrano. You can send it without uneasiness. It is a good letter.

Christian. You had? . . .

Cyrano. You shall never find us—poets!—without epistles in our pockets to the Chlorises . . . of our imagining! For we are those same that have for mistress a dream blown into the bubble of a name! Take,—you shall convert this feigning into earnest; I was sending forth at random these confessions and laments, you shall make the wandering birds to settle . . . Take it! You shall see . . . I was as eloquent as if I had been sincere! Take, and have done!

Christian. But will it not need to be altered in any part? . . . Written without object, will it fit Roxane?

Cyrano. Like a glove!

Christian. But . . .

Cyrano. Trust to the blindness of love . . . and vanity! Roxane will never question that it was written for her.

Christian. Ah, my friend! [*He throws himself into CYRANO'S arms. They stand embraced.*]

One of the Cadets [*opening the door a very little*]. Nothing more . . . The stillness of death . . . I dare not look . . . [*He thrusts in his head.*] What is this?

All the Cadets [*entering and seeing CYRANO and CHRISTIAN locked in each other's arms*]. Ah! . . . Oh! . . .

One of the Cadets. This passes bounds!

[*Consternation.*]

The Mousquetaire [*impudent*]. Quais? Carbon de Castel-Jaloux. Our demon is waxen mild as an apostle; smitten upon one nostril, he turns the other also!

The Mousquetaire. It is in order now to speak of his nose, is it? [*Calling LISE, with a swaggering air.*] Hey, Lise! now listen and look. [*Pointedly sniffing the air.*] Oh, . . . oh, . . . it is surprising! . . . what an odor! [*Going to CYRANO.*] But monsieur must have smelled it, too? Can you tell me what it is, so plain in the air?

Cyrano [*beating him*]. Why, sundry blows!

[*Joyful antics of the CADETS in beholding CYRANO himself again.*]

ACT THREE

ROXANE'S KISS

A small square in the old Marais. Old-fashioned houses. Narrow streets seen in perspective. At the right, ROXANE'S house and the wall of her garden, above which spreading tree-tops. Over the house-door, a balcony and window. A bench beside the doorstep.

The wall is overclambered by ivy, the balcony wreathed with jasmine.

By means of the bench and projecting stones in the wall, the balcony can easily be scaled.

On the opposite side, old house in the same style of architecture, brick and stone, with entrance-door. The door-knocker is swaddled in linen.

At the rise of the curtain, the DUENNA is seated on the bench. The window on ROXANE'S balcony is wide open.

RAGUENEAU, in a sort of livery, stands near the DUENNA; he is finishing the tale of his misfortunes, drying his eyes.

Ragueneau. And then, she eloped with a mousquetaire! Ruined, forsaken, I was hanging myself. I had already taken leave of earth, when Monsieur de Bergerac happening along, unhanged me, and proposed me to his cousin as her steward. . . .

The Duenna. But how did you fall into such disaster?

Ragueneau. Lise was fond of soldiers, I, of poets! Mars ate up all left over by Apollo. Under those circumstances, you conceive, the pantry soon was bare.

The Duenna [rising and calling toward the open window]. Roxane, are you ready? . . . They are waiting for us! . . .

Roxane's Voice [through the window]. I am putting on my mantle!

The Duenna [to RAGUENEAU, pointing at the door opposite]. It is over there, opposite, we are expected. At Clomire's. She holds a meeting in her little place. A disquisition upon the Softer Sentiments is to be read.

Ragueneau. Upon the Softer Sentiments?

The Duenna [coolly]. Yes! . . . *[Calling toward the window.]* Roxane, you must make haste, or we shall miss the disquisition upon the Softer Sentiments!

Roxane's Voice. I am coming!

[A sound of string-instruments is heard, drawing nearer.]

Cyrano's Voice [singing in the wings]. La! la! la! la! la! . . .

The Duenna [surprised]. We are to have music?

Cyrano [enters followed by two PAGES with theorbos]. I tell you it is a demi-semi-quaver! . . . you demi-semi-noddle!

First Page [ironically]. Monsieur knows then about quavers, semi and demi?

Cyrano. I know music, as do all Gassendi's disciples!

The Page [playing and singing]. La! la!

Cyrano [snatching the theorbo from him and continuing the musical phrase]. I can carry on the melody. . . . La, la, la, la, . . .

Roxane [appearing on the balcony]. It is you?

Cyrano [singing upon the tune he is continuing]. I, indeed, who salute your lilies and present my respects to your ro-oses! . . .

Roxane. I am coming down. *[She leaves the balcony.]*

The Duenna [pointing at the PAGES]. What is the meaning of these two virtuosi?

Cyrano. A wager I won, from D'Assoucy. We were disputing upon a question of grammar. Yes! No! Yes! No! Suddenly pointing at these two tall knaves, expert at clawing strings, by whom he constantly goes attended, he said, "I wager a day long of music!" He lost. Until therefore the next rise of the sun, I shall have dangling after me these arch-lute players, harmonious witnesses of all I do! . . . At first I liked it very well, but now it palls a little. *[To the musicians.]* Hey! . . . Go, from me to Montfleury, and play him a pavane! . . . *[The PAGES go toward the back. To the DUENNA.]* I have come to inquire of Roxane, as I do every evening . . . *[To the PAGES who are leaving.]* Play a long time . . . and out of tune! *[To the DUENNA.]* . . . whether in the friend of her soul she can still detect no fault?

Roxane [coming out of the house]. Ah, how beautiful he is, what wit he has, how deeply I love him!

Cyrano [smiling]. Christian has so much wit? . . .

Roxane. Cousin, more than yourself!

Cyrano. I grant you.

Roxane. There is not one alive, I truly believe, more apt at turning those pretty nothings which yet are everything. . . . Sometimes he is of an absent mood, his muse is wool-gathering, then, suddenly, he will say the most enchanting things!

Cyrano [*incredulous*]. Come! . . .

Roxane. Oh, it is too bad! Men are all alike, narrow, narrow: because he is handsome, he cannot possibly be witty!

Cyrano. So he talks of the heart in acceptable fashion?

Roxane. Talks, cousin, is feeble. . . . He dissertates!

Cyrano. And writes? . . .

Roxane. Still better! Listen now to this . . . [*Declaiming*]. "*The more of my heart you steal from me, the more heart I have!*" [*Triumphantly to CYRANO.*] Well? . . .

Cyrano. Pooh!

Roxane. And to this: "*Since you have stolen my heart, and since I must suffer, to suffer with send me your own!*"

Cyrano. Now he has too much heart, now he has not enough, . . . just what does he want, in the matter of quantity?

Roxane. You vex me! You are eaten up with jealousy . . .

Cyrano [*starting*]. *Hein?*

Roxane. Author's jealousy! And this, could anything be more exquisitely tender? "*Unanimously, believe it, my heart cries out to you, and if kisses could be sent in writing, Love, you should read my letter with your lips . . .*"

Cyrano [*in spite of himself smiling with satisfaction*]. Ha! Ha! Those particular lines seem to me . . . ho! . . . ho! . . . [*remembering himself, disdainfully*] . . . puny, pretty . . .

Roxane. This, then . . .

Cyrano [*delighted*]. You know his letters by heart?

Roxane. All!

Cyrano. It is flattering, one cannot deny.

Roxane. In this art of expressing love he is a master!

Cyrano [*modest*]. Oh, . . . a master!

Roxane [*peremptory*]. A master!

Cyrano. As you please, then . . . a master!

The Duenna [*who had gone toward the back, coming quickly forward*]. Monsieur de Guiche! [*To CYRANO, pushing him toward the house.*] Go in! It is perhaps

better that he should not see you here! it might put him on the scent . . .

Roxane [*to CYRANO*]. Yes, of my dear secret! He loves me, he is powerful, . . . he must not find out! He might cut in sunder our loves . . . with an axe!

Cyrano [*going into the house*]. Very well, very well.

[*DE GUICHE appears.*]

Roxane [*to DE GUICHE, with a curtsey*]. I was leaving the house.

De Guiche. I have come to bid you farewell.

Roxane. You are going away?

De Guiche. To war.

Roxane. Ah!

De Guiche. I have my orders. Arras is besieged.

Roxane. Ah! . . . It is besieged?

De Guiche. Yes. . . . I see that my departure does not greatly affect you.

Roxane. Oh! . . .

De Guiche. As for me, I own it wrings my heart. Shall I see you again? . . . When? . . . You know that I am made commander-in-general?

Roxane [*uninterested*]. I congratulate you.

De Guiche. Of the Guards.

Roxane [*starting*]. Ah, . . . of the Guards?

De Guiche. Among whom your cousin serves, . . . the man of the boasts and tirades. I shall have opportunity in plenty to retaliate upon him down there.

Roxane [*suffocating*]. What? The Guards are going down there?

De Guiche. Surely. It is my regiment.

Roxane [*falls sitting upon the bench; aside*]. Christian!

De Guiche. What is it troubles you?

Roxane [*greatly moved*]. This departure . . . grieves me mortally. When one cares for a person . . . to know him away at the war!

De Guiche [*surprised and charmed*]. For the first time you utter a kind and feeling word, when I am leaving!

Roxane [*in a different tone, fanning herself*]. So . . . you are thinking of revenge upon my cousin?

De Guiche [*smiling*]. You side with him?

Roxane. No . . . against him.

De Guiche. Do you ~~see~~ much of him?

Roxane. Very little.

De Guiche. He is everywhere to be met with one of the cadets . . . [*trying to remember*] that Neu . . . villen . . . viller . . .

Roxane. A tall man?

De Guiche. Light-haired.

Roxane. Red-haired.

De Guiche. Good-looking.

Roxane. Pooh!

De Guiche. But a fool!

Roxane. He looks like one. [*In a different tone.*] Your vengeance upon Cyrano is then to place him within reach of shot, which is the thing of all he loves! . . . A miserable vengeance! . . . I know, I do, what would more seriously concern him!

De Guiche. And that is?

Roxane. Why . . . that the regiment should march, and leave him behind, with his beloved cadets, arms folded, the whole war through, in Paris! That is the only way to cast down a man like him. You wish to punish him? Deprive him of danger.

De Guiche. A woman! A woman! None but a woman could devise a vengeance of the sort!

Roxane. His friends will gnaw their fists, and he his very soul, with chagrin at not being under fire; and you will be abundantly avenged!

De Guiche [*coming nearer*]. Then you do love me a little? [*ROXANE smiles.*] I wish to see in this fact of your espousing my grudge a proof of affection, Roxane . . .

Roxane. . . . You may!

De Guiche [*showing several folded papers*]. I have here upon me the orders to be transmitted at once to each of the companies . . . except . . . [*he takes one from among the others.*] This one! . . . the company of the cadets . . . [*He puts it in his pocket.*] This, I will keep. [*Laughing.*] Ah, ah, ah! Cyrano! his belligerent humor! . . . So you sometimes play tricks upon people, you? . . .

Roxane. Sometimes.

De Guiche [*very near her*]. I love you to distraction! This evening . . . listen, . . . it is true that I must be gone. But to go when I feel that it is a matter for your caring! Listen! . . . There is, not far from here, in Rue Orléans, a convent founded by the Capuchins. Father Athanasius. A layman may not enter. But the

good fathers . . . I fear no difficulty with them! They will hide me up their sleeve . . . their sleeve is wide. They are the Capuchins that serve Richelieu at home. Fearing the uncle, they proportionately fear the nephew. I shall be thought to have left. I will come to you masked. Let me delay by a single day, wayward enchantress!

Roxane. But if it should transpire . . . your fame . . .

De Guiche. Bah!

Roxane. But . . . the siege . . . Arras! . . .

De Guiche. Must wait! Allow me, I beg . . .

Roxane. No!

De Guiche. I beseech!

Roxane [*tenderly*]. No! Love itself bids me forbid you!

De Guiche. Ah!

Roxane. You must go! [*Aside.*] Christian will stay! [*Aloud.*] For my sake, be heroic . . . Antony!

De Guiche. Ah, heavenly word upon your lips! . . . Then you love the one who . . .

Roxane. Who shall have made me tremble for his sake . . .

De Guiche [*in a transport of joy*]. Ah, I will go! [*He kisses her hand.*] Are you satisfied with me?

Roxane. My friend, I am.

[*Exit DE GUICHE.*]

The Duenna [*dropping a mocking curtsey toward his back*]. My friend, we are!

Roxane [*to the DUENNA*]. Not a word of what I have done: Cyrano would never forgive me for defrauding him of his war! [*She calls toward the house.*] Cousin! [*CYRANO comes out.*] We are going to Clomire's. [*She indicates the house opposite.*] Alcandre has engaged to speak, and so has Lysimon.

The Duenna [*putting her little finger to her ear*]. Yes, but my little finger tells me that we shall be too late to hear them!

Cyrano [*to ROXANE*]. Of all things do not miss the trained monkeys!

[*They have reached CLOMIRE's door.*]

The Duenna. See! . . . See! they have muffled the door-knocker! [*To the door-knocker.*] You have been gagged, that your voice should not disturb the beau-

afeful lecture, . . . little brutal disturber! [She lifts it with infinite care and knocks softly.]

Roxane [seeing the door open]. Come! [From the threshold to CYRANO.] If Christian should come, as probably he will, say he must wait!

Cyrano [hurriedly, as she is about to disappear]. Ah! [She turns.] Upon what shall you, according to your custom, question him to-day?

Roxane. Upon . . .

Cyrano [eagerly]. Upon? . . .

Roxane. But you will be silent . . .

Cyrano. As that wall!

Roxane. Upon nothing! I will say: Forward! Free rein! No curb! Improvise! Talk of love! Be magnificent!

Cyrano [smiling]. Good.

Roxane. Hush!

Cyrano. Hush!

Roxane. Not a word! [She goes in and closes the door.]

Cyrano [bowing, when the door is closed]. A thousand thanks!

[The door opens again and ROXANE looks out.]

Roxane. He might prepare his speeches

. . .

Cyrano. Ah, no! . . . the devil, no!

Both [together]. Hush!

[The door closes.]

Cyrano [calling]. Christian! [Enter CHRISTIAN.] I know all that we need to. Now make ready your memory. This is your chance to cover yourself with glory. Let us lose no time. Do not look sullen, like that. Quick! Let us go to your lodgings and I will rehearse you . . .

Christian. No!

Cyrano. What?

Christian. No, I will await Roxane here.

Cyrano. What insanity possesses you? Come quickly and learn . . .

Christian. No, I tell you! I am weary of borrowing my letters, my words . . . of playing a part, and living in constant fear. . . . It was very well at first, but now I feel that she loves me. I thank you heartily. I am no longer afraid. I will speak for myself . . .

Cyrano. Ouais? . . .

Christian. And what tells you that I shall not know how? I am not such an utter blockhead, after all! You shall see!

Your lessons have not been altogether wasted. I can shift to speak without your aid! And, that failing, by Heaven! I shall still know enough to take her in my arms! [Catching sight of ROXANE who is coming out from CLOMIRE'S.] She is coming! Cyrano, no, do not leave me! . . .

Cyrano [bowing to him]. I will not meddle, monsieur. [He disappears behind the garden wall.]

Roxane [coming from Clomire's house with a number of people from whom she is taking leave. Curtsies and farewells.] Barthénoid! . . . Alcandre! . . . Grémione! . . .

The Duenna [comically desperate]. We missed the disquisition upon the Softer Sentiments! [She goes into ROXANE'S house.]

Roxane [still taking leave of this one and that]. Urimédonte! . . . Good-bye!

[All bow to ROXANE, to one another, separate and go off by the various streets. ROXANE sees CHRISTIAN.]

Roxane. You are here! [She goes to him.] Evening is closing round. . . . Wait! . . . They have all gone. . . . The air is so mild. . . . Not a passer in sight. . . . Let us sit here. . . . Talk! . . . I will listen.

Christian [sits beside her, on the bench. Silence.] I love you.

Roxane [closing her eyes]. Yes. Talk to me of love.

Christian. I love you.

Roxane. Yes. That is the theme. Play variations upon it.

Christian. I love . . .

Roxane. Variations!

Christian. I love you so much . . .

Roxane. I do not doubt it. What further? . . .

Christian. And further . . . I should be so happy if you loved me! Tell me, Roxane, that you love me . . .

Roxane [pouting]. You proffer cider to me when I was hoping for champagne! . . . Now tell me a little how you love me?

Christian. Why . . . very, very much.

Roxane. Oh! . . . unravel, disentangle your sentiments!

Christian. Your throat! . . . I want to kiss it! . . .

Roxane. Christian!

Christian. I love you! . . .

Roxane [attempting to rise]. Again! . . .

Christian [hastily, holding her back]. No, I do not love you! . . .

Roxane [sitting down again]. That is fortunate!

Christian. I adore you!

Roxane [rising and moving away]. Oh! . . .

Christian. Yes, . . . love makes me into a fool!

Roxane [drily]. And I am displeased at it! as I should be displeased at your no longer being handsome.

Christian. But . . .

Roxane. Go, and rally your routed eloquence!

Christian. I . . .

Roxane. You love me. I have heard it. Good-evening. [She goes toward the house.]

Christian. No, no, not yet! . . . I wish to tell you . . .

Roxane [pushing open the door to go in]. That you adore me. Yes, I know. No! No! Go away! . . . Go! . . . Go! . . .

Christian. But I . . .

[She closes the door in his face.]

Cyrano [who has been on the scene a moment, unnoticed]. Unmistakably a success.

Christian. Help me!

Cyrano. No, sir, no.

Christian. I will go kill myself if I am not taken back into favor at once . . . at once!

Cyrano. And how can I . . . how, the devil? . . . make you learn on the spot . . .

Christian [seizing him by the arm]. Oh, there! . . . Look! . . . See!

[Light has appeared in the balcony window.]

Cyrano [with emotion]. Her window!

Christian. Oh, I shall die!

Cyrano. Not so loud!

Christian [in a whisper]. I shall die!

Cyrano. It is a dark night. . . .

Christian. Well?

Cyrano. All may be mended. But you do not deserve . . . There! stand there, miserable boy! . . . in front of the balcony! I will stand under it and prompt you.

Christian. But . . .

Cyrano. Do as I bid you!

The Pages [reappearing at the back, to CYRANO]. Hey!

Cyrano. Hush! [He signs to them to lower their voices.]

First Page [in a lower voice]. We have finished serenading Montfleury!

Cyrano [low, quickly]. Go and stand out of sight. One at this street corner, the other at that; and if any one comes near, play! . . .

Second Page. What sort of tune, Monsieur the Gassendist?

Cyrano. Merry if it be a woman, mournful if it be a man. [The PAGES disappear, one at each street corner. To CHRISTIAN.] Call her!

Christian. Roxane!

Cyrano [picking up pebbles and throwing them at the window-pane]. Wait! A few pebbles . . .

Roxane [opening the window]. Who is calling me?

Christian. It is I . . .

Roxane. Who is . . . I?

Christian. Christian!

Roxane [disdainfully]. Oh, you!

Christian. I wish to speak with you.

Cyrano [under the balcony, to CHRISTIAN]. Speak low! . . .

Roxane. No, your conversation is too common. You may go home!

Christian. In mercy! . . .

Roxane. No . . . you do not love me any more!

Christian [whom CYRANO is prompting]. You accuse me . . . just Heaven! of loving you no more . . . when I can love you no more!

Roxane [who was about to close her window, stopping]. Ah, that is a little better!

Christian [same business]. To what a . . . size has Love grown in my . . . sigh-rocked soul which the . . . cruel cherub has chosen for his cradle!

Roxane [stepping nearer to the edge of the balcony]. That is distinctly better! . . . But, since he is so cruel, this Cupid, you were unwise not to smother him in his cradle!

Christian [same business]. I tried to, but, madame, the . . . attempt was futile. This . . . new-born Love is . . . a little Hercules . . .

Roxane. Much, much better!

Christian [same business]. . . . Who found it merest baby-play to . . . strangle the serpents . . . twain, Pride and . . . Mistrust.

Roxane [leaning her elbows on the balcony-rail]. Ah, that is very good indeed! . . . But why do you speak so slowly and stintedly? Has your imagination gout in its wings?

Cyrano [drawing CHRISTIAN under the balcony, and taking his place]. Hush! It is becoming too difficult!

Roxane. To-night your words come falteringly. . . . Why is it?

Cyrano [talking low like CHRISTIAN]. Because of the dark. They have to grope to find your ear.

Roxane. My words do not find the same difficulty.

Cyrano. They reach their point at once? Of course they do! That is because I catch them with my heart. My heart, you see, is very large, your ear particularly small. . . . Besides, your words drop . . . that goes quickly; mine have to climb . . . and that takes longer!

Roxane. They have been climbing more nimbly, however, in the last few minutes.

Cyrano. They are becoming used to this gymnastic feat!

Roxane. It is true that I am talking with you from a very mountain top!

Cyrano. It is sure that a hard word dropped from such a height upon my heart would shatter it!

Roxane [with the motion of leaving]. I will come down.

Cyrano [quickly]. Do not!

Roxane [pointing at the bench at the foot of the balcony]. Then do you get up on the seat! . . .

Cyrano [drawing away in terror]. No!

Roxane. How do you mean . . . no?

Cyrano [with ever-increasing emotion]. Let us profit a little by this chance of talking softly together without seeing each other . . .

Roxane. Without seeing each other? . . .

Cyrano. Yes, to my mind, delectable! Each guesses at the other, and no more. You discern but the trailing blackness of a mantle, and I a dawn-gray glimmer which is a summer gown. I am a shadow merely, a pearly phantom are you! You can never know what these moments are to me! If ever I was eloquent . . .

Roxane. You were!

Cyrano. My words never till now surged from my very heart . . .

Roxane. And why?

Cyrano. Because, till now, they must strain to reach you through . . .

Roxane. What?

Cyrano. Why, the bewildering emotion a man feels who sees you, and whom you look upon! . . . But this evening, it seems to me that I am speaking to you for the first time!

Roxane. It is true that your voice is altogether different.

Cyrano [coming nearer, feverishly]. Yes, altogether different, because, protected by the dark, I dare at last to be myself. I dare . . . [He stops, and distractedly.] What was I saying? . . . I do not know. . . . All this . . . forgive my incoherence! . . . is so delicious . . . is so new to me!

Roxane. So new? . . .

Cyrano [in extreme confusion, still trying to mend his expressions]. So new . . . yes, new, to be sincere; the fear of being mocked always constrains my heart . . .

Roxane. Mocked . . . for what?

Cyrano. Why, . . . for its impulses, its flights! . . . Yes, my heart always cowers behind the defence of my wit. I set forth to capture a star . . . and then, for dread of laughter, I stop and pick a flower . . . of rhetoric!

Roxane. That sort of flower has its pleasing points . . .

Cyrano. But yet, to-night, let us scorn it!

Roxane. Never before had you spoken as you are speaking! . . .

Cyrano. Ah, if far from Cupid-darts and quivers, we might seek a place of somewhat fresher things! If instead of drinking, flat sip by sip, from a chiselled golden thimble, drops distilled and dulcified, we might try the sensation of quenching the thirst of our souls by stooping to the level of the great river, and setting our lips to the stream!

Roxane. But yet, wit . . . fancy . . . delicate conceits . . .

Cyrano. I gave my fancy leave to frame conceits, before, to make you linger, . . . but now it would be an affront to this balm-breathing night, to Nature and the hour, to talk like characters in a pastoral performed at Court! . . . Let us give Heaven leave, looking at us with all its earnest stars, to strip us of disguise and artifice: I fear, . . . oh, fear! . . . lest in

our mistaken alchemy sentiment should be subtilized to evaporation; lest the life of the heart should waste in these empty pastimes, and the final refinement of the fine be the undoing of the refined!

Roxane. But yet, wit, . . . aptness, . . . ingenuity . . .

Cyrano. I hate them in love! Criminal, when one loves, to prolong overmuch that paltry thrust and parry! The moment, however, comes inevitably,—and I pity those for whom it never comes!—in which, we apprehending the noble depth of the love we harbor, a shallow word hurts us to utter!

Roxane. If . . . if, then, that moment has come for us two, what words will you say to me?

Cyrano. All those, all those, all those that come to me! Not in formal nosegay order, . . . I will throw them you in a wild sheaf! I love you, choke with love, I love you, dear. . . . My brain reels, I can bear no more, it is too much. . . . Your name is in my heart the golden clapper in a bell; and as I know no rest, Roxane, always the heart is shaken, and ever rings your name! . . . Of you, I remember all, all have I loved! Last year, one day, the twelfth of May, in going out at morning you changed the fashion of your hair. . . . I have taken the light of your hair for my light, and as having stared too long at the sun, on everything one sees a scarlet wheel, on everything when I come from my chosen light, my dazzled eyes set swimming golden blots! . . .

Roxane [in a voice unsteady with emotion]. Yes . . . this is love . . .

Cyrano. Ah, verily! The feeling which invades me, terrible and jealous, is love . . . with all its mournful frenzy! It is love, yet self-forgetting more than the wont of love! Ah, for your happiness now readily would I give mine, though you should never know it, might I but, from a distance, sometimes, hear the happy laughter bought by my sacrifice! Every glance of yours breeds in me new strength, new valor! Are you beginning to understand? Tell me, do you grasp my love's measure? Does some little part of my soul make itself felt of you there in the darkness? . . . Oh, what is happening to me this evening is too sweet, too deeply dear! I tell you all these

things, and you listen to me, you! Not in my least modest hoping did I ever hope so much! I have now only to die! It is because of words of mine that she is trembling among the dusky branches! For you are trembling, like a flower among leaves! Yes, you tremble, . . . for whether you will or no, I have felt the worshipped trembling of your hand all along this thrilled and blissful jasmine-bough! [*He madly kisses the end of a pendent bough.*]

Roxane. Yes, I tremble . . . and weep . . . and love you . . . and am yours! . . . For you have carried me away . . . away! . . .

Cyrano. Then, let death come! I have moved you, I! . . . There is but one thing more I ask . . .

Christian [under the balcony]. A kiss!

Roxane [drawing hastily back]. What?

Cyrano. Oh!

Roxane. You ask? . . .

Cyrano. Yes . . . I . . . [*To CHRISTIAN.*] You are in too great haste!

Christian. Since she is so moved, I must take advantage of it!

Cyrano [to ROXANE]. I . . . Yes, it is true I asked . . . but, merciful heavens! . . . I knew at once that I had been too bold.

Roxane [a shade disappointed]. You insist no more than so?

Cyrano. Indeed, I insist . . . without insisting! Yes! yes! but your modesty shrinks! . . . I insist, but yet . . . the kiss I begged . . . refuse it me!

Christian [to CYRANO, pulling at his mantle]. Why?

Cyrano. Hush, Christian!

Roxane [bending over the balcony-rail]. What are you whispering?

Cyrano. Reproaches to myself for having gone too far; I was saying "Hush, Christian!" [*The theorbos are heard playing.*] Your pardon! . . . a second! . . . Someone is coming!

[*ROXANE closes the window. CYRANO listens to the theorbos, one of which plays a lively and the other a lugubrious tune.*]

Cyrano. A dance? . . . A dirge? . . . What do they mean? Is it a man or a woman? . . . Ah, it is a monk!

[*Enter a CAPUCHIN MONK, who*

goes from house to house, with a lantern, examining the doors.]

Cyrano [to the CAPUCHIN]. What are you looking for, Diogenes?

The Capuchin. I am looking for the house of Madame . . .

Christian. He is in the way!

The Capuchin. Magdeleine Robin . . .

Cyrano [pointing up one of the streets]. This way! . . . straight ahead . . . go straight ahead . . .

The Capuchin. I thank you. I will say ten Aves for your peace. *[Exit.]*

Cyrano. My good wishes speed your cowl! *[He comes forward toward CHRISTIAN.]*

Christian. Insist upon the kiss! . . .

Cyrano. No, I will not!

Christian. Sooner or later . . .

Cyrano. It is true! It must come, the moment of inebriation when your lips shall imperiously be impelled toward each other, because the one is fledged with youthful gold and the other is so soft a pink! . . . *[To himself.]* I had rather it should be because . . .

[Sound of the window reopening; CHRISTIAN hides under the balcony.]

Roxane [stepping forward on the balcony]. Are you there? We were speaking of . . . of . . . of a . . .

Cyrano. Kiss. The word is sweet. Why does your fair lip stop at it? If the mere word burns it, what will be of the thing itself? Do not make it into a fearful matter, and then fear! Did you not a moment ago insensibly leave playfulness behind and slip without trepidation from a smile to a sigh, from a sigh to a tear? Slip but a little further in the same blessed direction: from a tear to a kiss there is scarcely a dividing shiver!

Roxane. Say no more!

Cyrano. A kiss! When all is said, what is a kiss? An oath of allegiance taken in closer proximity, a promise more precise, a seal on a confession, a rose-red dot upon the letter i in loving; a secret which elects the mouth for ear; an instant of eternity murmuring like a bee; balmy communion with a flavor of flowers; a fashion of inhaling each other's heart, and of tasting, on the brink of the lips, each other's soul!

Roxane. Say no more . . . no more!

Cyrano. A kiss, madame, is a thing so

noble that the Queen of France, on the most fortunate of lords, bestowed one, did the queen herself!

Roxane. If that be so . . .

Cyrano [with increasing fervor]. Like Buckingham I have suffered in long silence, like him I worship a queen, like him I am sorrowful and unchanging . . .

Roxane. Like him you enthrall through the eyes the heart that follows you!

Cyrano [to himself, sobered]. True, I am handsome . . . I had forgotten!

Roxane. Come then and gather it, the supreme flower . . .

Cyrano [pushing CHRISTIAN toward the balcony]. Go!

Roxane. . . . tasting of the heart.

Cyrano. Go! . . .

Roxane. . . . murmuring like a bee . . .

Cyrano. Go!

Christian [hesitating]. But now I feel as if I ought not!

Roxane. . . . making Eternity an instant . . .

Cyrano [pushing CHRISTIAN]. Scale the balcony, you donkey!

[CHRISTIAN springs toward the balcony, and climbs by means of the bench, the vine, the posts and balusters.]

Christian. Ah, Roxane! *[He clasps her to him, and bends over her lips.]*

Cyrano. Ha! . . . What a turn of the screw to my heart! . . . Kiss, banquet of Love at which I am Lazarus, a crumb drops from your table even to me, here in the shade. . . . Yes, in my outstretched heart a little falls, as I feel that upon the lip pressing her lip Roxane kisses the words spoken by me! . . . *[The theorbos are heard.]* A merry tune . . . a mournful one. . . . The monk! *[He goes through the pretence of arriving on the spot at a run, as if from a distance calling.]* Ho, there!

Roxane. What is it?

Cyrano. It is I. I was passing this way. Is Christian there?

Christian [astonished]. Cyrano!

Roxane. Good-evening, cousin!

Cyrano. Cousin, good-evening!

Roxane. I will come down.

[ROXANE disappears in the house.]

[CAPUCHIN re-enters at the back.]

Christian [seeing him]. Oh, again! *[He follows ROXANE.]*

The Capuchin. It is here she lives, I am certain . . . Magdeleine Robin.

Cyrano. You said Ro-lin.

The Capuchin. No, bin, . . . b, i, n, bin!

Roxane [appearing upon the threshold, followed by RAGUENEAU carrying a lantern, and CHRISTIAN]. What is it?

The Capuchin. A letter.

Christian. What?

The Capuchin [to ROXANE]. Oh, the contents can be only of a sacred character! It is from a worthy nobleman who . . .

Roxane [to CHRISTIAN]. It is from De Guiche!

Christian. He dares to . . . ?

Roxane. Oh, he will not trouble me much longer! [Opening the letter.] I love you, and if . . . [By the light of RAGUENEAU'S lantern she reads, aside, low.] Mademoiselle: The drums are beating. My regiment is buckling on its corselet. It is about to leave. I am thought to have left already, but lag behind. I am disobeying you. I am in the convent here. I am coming to you, and send you word by a friar, silly as a sheep, who has no suspicion of the import of this letter. You smiled too sweetly upon me an hour ago: I must see you smile again. Provide to be alone, and deign graciously to receive the audacious worshipper, forgiven already, I can but hope, who signs himself your—etc. . . . [To the CAPUCHIN.] Father, this is what the letter tells me . . . Listen: [All draw nearer; she reads aloud.] Mademoiselle: The wishes of the cardinal may not be disregarded, however hard compliance with them prove. I have therefore chosen as bearer of this letter a most reverend, holy, and sagacious Capuchin; it is our wish that he should at once, in your own dwelling pronounce the nuptial blessing over you. Christian must secretly become your husband. I send him to you. You dislike him. Bow to Heaven's will in resignation, and be sure that it will bless your zeal, and sure, likewise, mademoiselle, of the respect of him who is and will be ever your most humble and . . . etc.

The Capuchin [beaming]. The worthy gentleman! . . . I know it! You remember that I said so: The contents of that letter can be only of a sacred character!

Roxane [low, to CHRISTIAN]. I am a fluent reader, am I not?

Christian. Hm!

Roxane [with feigned despair]. Ah . . . it is horrible!

The Capuchin [who has turned the light of his lantern upon CYRANO]. You are the one?

Christian. No, I am.

The Capuchin [turning the light upon him, and as if his good looks aroused suspicion]. But . . .

Roxane [quickly]. Postscript: You will bestow upon the convent two hundred and fifty crowns.

The Capuchin. The worthy, worthy gentleman! [To ROXANE.] Be reconciled!

Roxane [with the expression of a martyr]. I will endeavor! [While RAGUENEAU opens the door for the CAPUCHIN, whom CHRISTIAN is showing into the house, ROXANE says low to CYRANO.] De Guiche is coming! . . . Keep him here! Do not let him enter until . . .

Cyrano. I understand! [To the CAPUCHIN.] How long will it take to marry them?

The Capuchin. A quarter of an hour.

Cyrano [pushing all toward the house]. Go in! I shall be here!

Roxane [to CHRISTIAN]. Come!

[They go in.]

Cyrano. How can I detain De Guiche for a quarter of an hour? [He jumps upon the bench, climbs the wall toward the balcony-rail.] So! . . . I climb up here! . . . I know what I will do! . . . [The theorbos play a melancholy tune.] Ho, it is a man! [The tune quavers lugubriously.] Ho, ho, this time there is no mistake! [He is on the balcony; he pulls the brim of his hat over his eyes, takes off his sword, wraps his cloak about him, and bends over the balcony-rail.] No, it is not too far! [He climbs over the balcony-rail, and reaching for a long bough that projects beyond the garden wall, holds on to it with both hands, ready to let himself drop.] I shall make a slight commotion in the atmosphere!

De Guiche [enters masked, groping in the dark]. What can that thrice-damned Capuchin be about?

Cyrano. The devil! if he should recognize my voice? [Letting go with one hand he makes show of turning a key.] Cric! crac! [Solemnly.] Cyrano, resume the accent of Bergerac!

De Guiche [looking at ROXANE'S house].

Yes, that is it. I can scarcely see. This mask bothers my eyes!

[He is about to enter ROXANE'S house; CYRANO swings from the balcony, holding on to the bough, which bends and lets him down between the door and DE GUICHE. He intentionally drops very heavily, to give the effect of dropping from a great height, and lies flattened upon the ground, motionless, as if stunned.]

De Guiche. What is it? *[When he looks up, the bough has swung into place; he sees nothing but the sky.]* Where did this man drop from?

Cyrano *[rising to a sitting posture]*. From the moon!

De Guiche. From the . . . ?

Cyrano *[in a dreamy voice]*. What time is it?

De Guiche. Is he mad?

Cyrano. What time? What country? What day? What season?

De Guiche. But . . .

Cyrano. I am dazed!

De Guiche. Monsieur . . .

Cyrano. I have dropped from the moon like a bomb!

De Guiche *[impatiently]*. What are you babbling about?

Cyrano *[rising, in a terrible voice]*. I tell you I have dropped from the moon!

De Guiche *[backing a step]*. Very well. You have dropped from the moon! . . . He is perhaps a lunatic!

Cyrano *[walking up close to him]*. Not metaphorically, mind that!

De Guiche. But . . .

Cyrano. A hundred years ago, or else a minute,—for I have no conception how long I have been falling,—I was up there, in that saffron-colored ball!

De Guiche *[shrugging his shoulders]*. You were. Now let me pass!

Cyrano *[standing in his way]*. Where am I? Be frank with me! Keep nothing from me! In what region, among what people, have I been shot like an aerolite?

De Guiche. I wish to pass!

Cyrano. While falling I could not choose my way, and have no notion where I have fallen! Is it upon a moon, or is it upon an earth, I have been dragged by my posterior weight?

De Guiche. I tell you, sir . . .

Cyrano *[with a scream of terror at which DE GUICHE starts backward a step]*. Great God! . . . In this country men's faces are soot-black!

De Guiche *[lifting his hand to his face]*. What does he mean?

Cyrano *[still terrified]*. Am I in Algeria? Are you a native? . . .

De Guiche *[who has felt his mask]*. Ah, my mask!

Cyrano *[pretending to be easier]*. So I am in Venice! . . . Or am I in Genoa?

De Guiche *[attempting to pass]*. A lady is expecting me!

Cyrano *[completely reassured]*. Ah, then I am in Paris.

De Guiche *[smiling in spite of himself]*. The rogue is not far from amusing!

Cyrano. Ah, you are laughing!

De Guiche. I laugh . . . but intend to pass!

Cyrano *[beaming]*. To think I should strike Paris! *[Quite at his ease, laughing, brushing himself, bowing.]* I arrived—pray, pardon my appearance!—by the last whirlwind. I am rather unpresentable—Travel, you know! My eyes are still full of star-dust. My spurs are clogged with bristles off a planet. *[Appearing to pick something off his sleeve.]* See, on my sleeve, a comet's hair! *[He makes a feint of blowing it away.]*

De Guiche *[beside himself]*. Sir . . .

Cyrano *[as DE GUICHE is about to pass, stretching out his leg as if to show something on it, thereby stopping him]*. Embedded in my calf, I have brought back one of the Great Bear's teeth . . . and as, falling too near the Trident, I strained aside to clear one of its prongs, I landed sitting in Libra, . . . yes, one of the scales! . . . and now my weight is registered up there! *[Quickly preventing DE GUICHE from passing, and taking hold of a button on his doublet.]* And if, monsieur, you should take my nose between your fingers and compress it . . . milk would result!

De Guiche. What are you saying? Milk? . . .

Cyrano. Of the Milky Way.

De Guiche. Go to the devil!

Cyrano. No! I am sent from Heaven, literally. *[Folding his arms.]* Will you believe—I discovered it in passing—that

Sirius at night puts on a night-cap? [*Confidentially.*] The lesser Bear is too little yet to bite. . . . [*Laughing.*] I tumbled plump through Lyra, and snapped a string! . . . [*Magnificent.*] But I intend setting all this down in a book, and the golden stars I have brought back caught in my shaggy mantle, when the book is printed, will be seen serving as asterisks!

De Guiche. I have stood this long enough! I want . . .

Cyrano. I know perfectly what you want!

De Guiche. Man . . .

Cyrano. You want to know, from me, at first hand, what the moon is made of, and whether that monumental pumpkin is inhabited?

De Guiche [*shouting*]. Not in the very least! I want . . .

Cyrano. To know how I got there? I got there by a method of my own invention.

De Guiche [*discouraged*]. He is mad! . . . stark!

Cyrano [*disdainfully*]. Do not imagine that I resorted to anything so absurd as Regiomontanus's eagle, or anything so lacking in enterprise as Archytas's pigeon! . . .

De Guiche. The madman is erudite . . .

Cyrano. I drew up nothing that had ever been thought of before! [*DE GUICHE has succeeded in getting past CYRANO, and is nearing ROXANE'S door; CYRANO follows him, ready to buttonhole him.*] I invented no less than six ways of storming the blue fort of Heaven!

De Guiche [*turning around*]. Six, did you say?

Cyrano [*volubly*]. One way was to stand naked in the sunshine, in a harness thickly studded with glass phials, each filled with morning dew. The sun in drawing up the dew, you see, could not have helped drawing me up too!

De Guiche [*surprised, taking a step toward CYRANO*]. True. That is one!

Cyrano [*taking a step backward, with a view to drawing DE GUICHE away from the door*]. Or else, I could have let the wind into a cedar coffer, then rarefied the imprisoned element by means of cunningly adjusted burning-glasses, and soared up with it!

De Guiche [*taking another step toward CYRANO*]. Two!

Cyrano [*backing*]. Or else, mechanic as well as artificer, I could have fashioned a giant grasshopper, with steel joints, which, impelled by successive explosions of salt-peter, would have hopped with me to the azure meadows where graze the starry flocks!

De Guiche [*unconsciously following CYRANO, and counting on his fingers*]. That makes three!

Cyrano. Since smoke by its nature ascends, I could have blown into an appropriate globe a sufficient quantity to ascend with me!

De Guiche [*as above, more and more astonished*]. Four!

Cyrano. Since Phœbe, the moon-goddess, when she is at wane, is greedy, O beeves! of your marrow, . . . with that marrow have besmeared myself!

De Guiche [*amazed*]. Five!

Cyrano [*who while talking has backed, followed by DE GUICHE, to the further side of the square, near a bench*]. Or else, I could have placed myself upon an iron plate, have taken a magnet of suitable size, and thrown it in the air! That way is a very good one! The magnet flies upward, the iron instantly after; the magnet no sooner overtaken than you fling it up again. . . . The rest is clear! You can go upward indefinitely.

De Guiche. Six! . . . But here are six excellent methods! Which of the six, my dear sir, did you select?

Cyrano. A seventh!

De Guiche. Did you, indeed? And what was that?

Cyrano. I give you a hundred guesses!

De Guiche. No!

Cyrano [*imitating the noise of the surf, and making great mysterious gestures*]. Hoo-ish! hoo-ish!

De Guiche. Well! What is that?

Cyrano. Cannot you guess?

De Guiche. No!

Cyrano. The tide! . . . At the hour in which the moon attracts the deep, I lay down upon the sands, after a sea-bath . . . and, my head being drawn up first,—the reason of this, you see, that the hair will hold a quantity of water in its mop!—I rose in the air, straight, beautifully straight, like an angel. I rose . . . I rose . . .

softly . . . without an effort . . . when, suddenly, I felt a shock. Then . . .

De Guiche [lured on by curiosity, taking a seat on the bench]. Well, . . . then?

Cyrano. Then . . . [resuming his natural voice.] The time is up, monsieur, and I release you. They are married.

De Guiche [getting to his feet with a leap]. I am dreaming or drunk! That voice! [The door of ROXANE's house opens; lackeys appear carrying lighted candelabra. CYRANO removes his hat.] And that nose! . . . *Cyrano*!

Cyrano [bowing]. *Cyrano*. They have exchanged rings within the quarter of the hour.

De Guiche. Who have? [He turns round. Tableau. Behind the lackey stand ROXANE and CHRISTIAN holding hands. The CAPUCHIN follows them smiling. RAGUENEAU holds high a flambeau. The DUENNA closes the procession, bewildered, in her bedgown.] Heavens! [To ROXANE.] You! [Recognizing CHRISTIAN with amazement.] He? [Bowing to ROXANE.] Your astuteness compels my admiration! [To CYRANO.] My compliments to you, ingenious inventor of flying machines. Your experiences would have beguiled a saint on the threshold of Paradise! Make a note of them. . . . They can be used again, with profit, in a book!

Cyrano [bowing]. I will confidently follow your advice.

The Capuchin [to DE GUICHE, pointing at the lovers, and wagging his great white beard with satisfaction]. A beautiful couple, my son, brought together by you!

De Guiche [eyeing him frigidly]. As you say! [To ROXANE.] And now proceed, Madame, to take leave of your husband.

Roxane. What?

De Guiche [to CHRISTIAN]. The regiment is on the point of starting. You are to join it!

Roxane. To go to war?

De Guiche. Of course!

Roxane. But the cadets are not going!

De Guiche. They are! [Taking out the paper which he had put in his pocket.] Here is the order. [To CHRISTIAN.] I beg you will take it to the Captain, baron, yourself.

Roxane [throwing herself in CHRISTIAN's arms]. Christian!

De Guiche [to CYRANO, with a malignant laugh]. The wedding night is somewhat far as yet!

Cyrano [aside]. He thinks that he is giving me great pain!

Christian [to ROXANE]. Oh, once more, dear! . . . Once more!

Cyrano. Be reasonable . . . Come! . . . Enough!

Christian [still clasping ROXANE]. Oh, it is hard to leave her. . . . You cannot know . . .

Cyrano [trying to draw him away]. I know.

[Drums are heard in the distance sounding a march.]

De Guiche [at the back]. The regiment is on its way!

Roxane [to CYRANO, while she clings to CHRISTIAN whom he is trying to draw away]. Oh! . . . I entrust him to your care! Promise that under no circumstance shall his life be placed in danger!

Cyrano. I will endeavor . . . but obviously cannot promise . . .

Roxane [same business]. Promise that he will be careful of himself!

Cyrano. I will do my best, but . . .

Roxane [as above]. That during this terrible siege he shall not take harm from the cold!

Cyrano. I will try, but . . .

Roxane [as above]. That he will be true to me!

Cyrano. Of course, but yet, you see . . .

Roxane [as above]. That he will write to me often!

Cyrano [stopping]. Ah, that . . . I promise freely!

ACT FOUR

THE GASCONY CADETS

The post occupied at the siege of Arras by the company of CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX. At the back, across the whole stage, sloping earthwork. Beyond this is seen a plain stretching to the horizon; the country is covered with constructions relating to the siege. In the distance, against the sky, the outlines of the walls and roofs of Arras. Tents; scattered arms; drums, etc. It is shortly before sunrise. The East is yellow. Sentinels at even intervals.

Camp-fires. The GASCONY CADETS lie asleep, rolled in their cloaks. CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX and LE BRET are watching. All are very pale and gaunt. CHRISTIAN lies sleeping among the others, in his military cape, in the foreground, his face lighted by one of the camp-fires. Silence.

Le Bret. It is dreadful!

Carbon. Yes. Nothing left.

Le Bret. Mordious!

Carbon [warning him by a gesture to speak lower]. Curse in a whisper! You will wake them! . . . [To the CADETS.] Hush! Go to sleep! [To LE BRET.] Who sleeps dines.

Le Bret. Who lies awake misses two good things . . . What a situation!

[A few shots are heard in the distance.]

Carbon. The devil take their popping! They will wake my young ones! . . . [To the CADETS who lift their heads.] Go to sleep!

[The CADETS lie down again. Other shots are heard, nearer.]

One of the Cadets [stirring]. The devil! Again?

Carbon. It is nothing. It is Cyrano getting home.

[The heads which had started up, go down again.]

A Sentinel [outside]. Ventrebleu! Who goes there?

Cyrano's Voice. Bergerac!

The Sentinel [upon the embankment]. Ventrebleu! Who goes there?

Cyrano [appearing at the top of the embankment]. Bergerac, blockhead! [He comes down. LE BRET goes to him, uneasy.]

Le Bret. Ah, thank God!

Cyrano [warning him by a sign to wake no one]. Hush!

Le Bret. Wounded?

Cyrano. Do you not know that it has become a habit with them to miss me?

Le Bret. To me, it seems a little excessive that you should, every morning, for the sake of taking a letter, risk . . .

Cyrano [stopping in front of CHRISTIAN]. I promised that he would write often. [He looks at CHRISTIAN.] He sleeps. He has grown pale. If the poor little girl could know that he is starving. . . . But handsome as ever!

Le Bret. Go at once and sleep.

Cyrano. Le Bret, do not grumble! Learn this: I nightly cross the Spanish lines at a point where I know beforehand everyone will be drunk.

Le Bret. You ought some time to bring us back some victuals!

Cyrano. I must be lightly burdened to flit through! . . . But I know that there will be events before the evening. The French, unless I am much mistaken, will eat or die.

Le Bret. Oh, tell us!

Cyrano. No, I am not certain . . . You will see!

Carbon. What a shameful reversal of the order of things, that the besieger should be starved!

Le Bret. Alas! never was more complicated siege than this of Arras: We besiege Arras, and, caught in a trap, are ourselves besieged by the Cardinal-prince of Spain. . . .

Cyrano. Someone now ought to come and besiege him.

Le Bret. I am not joking!

Cyrano. Oh, oh!

Le Bret. To think, ungrateful boy, that every day you risk a life precious as yours, solely to carry . . . [CYRANO goes toward one of the tents.] Where are you going?

Cyrano. I am going to write another.

[He lifts the canvas flap, and disappears in the tent. Daybreak has brightened. Rosy flush. The city of Arras at the horizon catches a golden light. The report of a cannon is heard, followed at once by a drum-call, very far away, at the left. Other drums beat, nearer. The drum-calls answer one another, come nearer, come very near, and go off, decreasing, dying in the distance, toward the right, having made the circuit of the camp. Noise of general awakening. Voices of officers in the distance.]

Carbon [with a sigh]. The réveillé . . . Ah, me! . . . [The CADETS stir in their cloaks, stretch.] An end to the succulent slumbers! I know but too well what their first word will be!

One of the Cadets [sitting up]. I am famished!

Other Cadet. I believe I am dying!

All. Oh! . . .

Carbon. Get up!

Third Cadet. I cannot go a step!

Fourth Cadet. I have not strength to stir!

First Cadet [*looking at himself in a bit of armor*]. My tongue is coated: it must be the weather that is indigestible!

Other Cadet. Anyone who wants them, can have all my titles of nobility for a Chester cheese . . . or part of one!

Other Cadet. If my stomach does not have something put into it to take up the attention of my gastric juice, I shall retire into my tent before long . . . like Achilles!

Other Cadet. Yes, they ought to provide us with bread!

Carbon [*going to the tent into which CYRANO has retired; low*]. Cyrano!

Other Cadets. We cannot stand this much longer!

Carbon [*as above, at the door of the tent*]. To the rescue, Cyrano! You who succeed so well always in cheering them, come and make them pluck up spirits!

Second Cadet [*falling upon FIRST CADET who is chewing something*]. What are you chewing, man?

First Cadet. A bit of gun-tow fried in axle-grease . . . using a burganet as frying pan. The suburbs of Arras are not precisely rich in game. . . .

Other Cadet [*entering*]. I have been hunting!

Other Cadet [*the same*]. I have been fishing!

All [*rising and falling upon the newcomers*]. What?—what did you catch?—A pheasant?—A carp?—Quick! quick! . . . Let us see!

The Huntsman. A sparrow!

The Angler. A gudgeon!

All [*exasperated*]. Enough of this! Let us revolt!

Carbon. To the rescue, Cyrano!

[*It is now broad daylight.*]

Cyrano [*coming out of the tent, tranquil, a pen behind his ear, a book in his hand*]. What is the matter? [*Silence. To FIRST CADET*]. Why do you go off like that, with that slouching gait?

The Cadet. I have something away down in my heels which inconveniences me.

Cyrano. And what is that?

The Cadet. My stomach.

Cyrano. That is where mine is, too.

The Cadet. Then you too must be inconvenienced.

Cyrano. No. The size of the hollow within me merely increases my sense of my size.

Second Cadet. I happen to have teeth, long ones!

Cyrano. The better will you bite . . . in good time!

Third Cadet. I reverberate like a drum!

Cyrano. You will be of use . . . to sound the charge!

Other Cadet. I have a buzzing in my ears!

Cyrano. A mistake. Empty belly, no ears. You hear no buzzing.

Other Cadet. Ah, a trifling article to eat . . . and a little oil upon it!

Cyrano [*taking off the CADET'S morion and placing it in his hand*]. That is seasoned.

Other Cadet. What is there we could devour?

Cyrano [*tossing him the book he has been holding*]. Try the Iliad!

Other Cadet. The minister, in Paris, makes his four meals a day!

Cyrano. You feel it remiss in him not to send you a bit of partridge?

The same. Why should he not? And some wine!

Cyrano. Richelieu, some Burgundy, if you please?

The same. He might, by one of his Capuchins!

Cyrano. By his Eminence, perhaps, in sober gray?

Other Cadet. No ogre was ever so hungry!

Cyrano. You may have your fill yet of humble-pie!

First Cadet [*shrugging his shoulders*]. Forever jests! . . . puns! . . . mots!

Cyrano. *Le mot* forever, indeed! And I would wish to die, on a fine evening, under a rose-flushed sky, delivering myself of a good *mot* in a good cause! . . . Ah, yes, the best were indeed, far from feverbed and potion, pierced with the only noble weapon, by an adversary worthy of oneself, to fall upon a glorious field, the point of a sword through his heart, the point of a jest on his lips! . . .

All [in a wail]. I am hungry!

Cyrano [folding his arms]. God ha' mercy! can you think of nothing but eating? . . . Come here, Bertrandou the fifer, once the shepherd! Take from the double case one of your fifes: breathe into it, play to this pack of guzzlers and of gluttons our homely melodies, of haunting rhythm, every note of which appeals like a little sister, through whose every strain are heard strains of beloved voices . . . mild melodies whose slowness brings to mind the slowness of the smoke upcurling from our native hamlet hearths . . . melodies that seem to speak to a man in his native dialect! . . . [*The old fifer sits down and makes ready his fife.*] To-day let the fife, martial unwillingly, be reminded, while your fingers upon its slender stem flutter like birds in a delicate minuet, that before being ebony it was reed; surprise itself by what you make it sing, . . . let it feel restored to it the soul of its youth, rustic and peaceable! [*The old man begins playing Languedoc tunes.*] Listen, Gascons! It is no more, beneath his fingers, the shrill fife of the camp, but the soft flute of the woodland! It is no more, between his lips, the whistling note of battle, but the lowly lay of goatherds leading their flocks to feed! . . . Hark! . . . It sings of the valley, the heath, the forest! . . . of the little shepherd, sunburned under his crimson cap! . . . the green delight of evening on the river! . . . Hark, Gascons all! It sings of Gascony!

[Every head has drooped; all eyes have grown dreamy; tears are furtively brushed away with a sleeve, the hem of a cloak.]

Carbon [to CYRANO, low]. You are making them weep!

Cyrano. With homesickness! . . . a nobler pain than hunger . . . not physical: mental! I am glad the seat of their suffering should have removed . . . that the gripe should now afflict their hearts!

Carbon. But you weaken them, making them weep!

Cyrano [beckoning to a drummer]. Never fear! The hero in their veins is quickly roused. It is enough to . . . [*He signs to the drummer, who begins drumming.*]

All [starting to their feet and snatching up their arms]. Hein? . . . What? . . . What is it?

Cyrano [smiling]. You see? . . . The sound of the drum was enough! Farewell dreams, regrets, old homestead, love. . . . What comes with the fife with the drum may go . . .

One of the Cadets [looking off at the back]. Ah! ah! . . . Here comes Monsieur de Guiche!

All the Cadets [grumbling]. Hoo . . .

Cyrano [smiling]. Flattering murmur . . .

One of the Cadets. He bores us! . . .

Other Cadet. Showing himself off, with his broad point collar on top of his armor! . . .

Other Cadet. As if lace were worn with steel!

First Cadet. Convenient, if you have a boil on your neck to cover . . .

Second Cadet. There is another courtier for you!

Other Cadet. His uncle's own nephew!

Carbon. He is a Gascon, nevertheless!

First Cadet. Not genuine! . . . Never trust him. For a Gascon, look you, must be something of a madman: nothing is so deadly to deal with as a Gascon who is completely rational!

Le Bret. He is pale!

Other Cadet. He is hungry, as hungry as any poor devil of us! But his corselet being freely embellished with gilt studs, his stomach-ache is radiant in the sun!

Cyrano [eagerly]. Let us not appear to suffer, either! You, your card, your pipes, your dice . . . [*All briskly set themselves to playing with cards and dice, on the heads of drums, on stools, on cloaks spread over the ground. They light long tobacco pipes.*] And I will be reading Descartes. . . .

[He walks to and fro, forward and backward, reading a small book which he has taken from his pocket. Tableau.]

[Enter DE GUICHE. Everyone appears absorbed and satisfied. DE GUICHE is very pale. He goes toward CARBON.]

De Guiche [to CARBON]. Ah, good-morning. [*They look at each other attentively. Aside, with satisfaction.*] He is pale as plaster.

Carbon [same business]. His eyes are all that is left of him.

De Guiche [looking at the CADETS]. So here are the wrongheaded rascals?

Yes, gentlemen, it is reported to me on every side that I am your scoff and derision; that the cadets, highland nobility, Béarn clodhoppers, Périgord baronets cannot express sufficient contempt for their colonel; call me intriguer, courtier, find it irksome to their taste that I should wear, with my cuirass, a collar of Genoese point, and never cease to air their wondering indignation that a man should be a Gascon without being a vagabond! [Silence. The CADETS continue smoking and playing.] Shall I have you punished by your captain? . . . I do not like to.

Carbon. Did you otherwise, however, . . . I am free, and punish only . . .

De Guiche. Ah? . . .

Carbon. My company is paid by myself, belongs to me. I obey no orders but such as relate to war.

De Guiche. Ah, is it so? Enough, then. I will treat your taunts with simple scorn. My fashion of deporting myself under fire is well known. You are not unaware of the manner in which yesterday, at Bapaume, I forced back the columns of the Comte de Bucquoi; gathering my men together to plunge forward like an avalanche, three times I charged him. . . .

Cyrano [without lifting his nose from his book]. And your white scarf?

De Guiche [surprised and self-satisfied]. You heard of that circumstance? . . . In fact, it happened that as I was wheeling about to collect my men for the third charge, I was caught in a stream of fugitives which bore me onward to the edge of the enemy. I was in danger of being captured and cut off with an arquebuse, when I had the presence of mind to untie and let slip to the ground the white scarf which proclaimed my military grade. Thus was I enabled, undistinguished, to withdraw from among the Spaniards, and thereupon returning with my reinspired men, to defeat them. Well? . . . What do you say to the incident?

[The CADETS have appeared not to be listening; at this point, however, hands with cards and dice-boxes remain suspended in the air; no pipe-smoke is ejected; all expresses expectation.]

Cyrano. That never would Henry the Fourth, however great the number of his

opponents, have consented to diminish his presence by the size of his white plume.

[Silent joy. Cards fall, dice rattle, smoke upwreathes.]

De Guiche. The trick was successful, however!

[As before, expectation suspends gambling and smoking.]

Cyrano. Very likely. But one should not resign the honor of being a target. [Cards, dice, smoke, fall, rattle, and upwreath, as before, in expression of increasing glee.] Had I been at hand when you allowed your scarf to drop—the quality of our courage, monsieur, shows different in this,—I would have picked it up and worn it. . . .

De Guiche. Ah, yes,—more of your Gascon bragging! . . .

Cyrano. Bragging? . . . Lend me the scarf. I engage to mount, ahead of all, to the assault, wearing it crosswise upon my breast!

De Guiche. A Gascon's offer, that too! You know that the scarf was left in the enemy's camp, by the banks of the Scarpe, where bullets since then have hailed . . . whence no one can bring it back!

Cyrano [taking a white scarf from his pocket and handing it to DE GUICHE]. Here it is.

[Silence. The CADETS smother their laughter behind cards and in dice-boxes. DE GUICHE turns around, looks at them; instantly they become grave; one of them, with an air of unconcern, whistles the tune played earlier by the fifer.]

De Guiche [taking the scarf]. I thank you. I shall be able with this shred of white to make a signal . . . which I was hesitating to make. . . . [He goes to the top of the bank and waves the scarf.]

All. What now? . . . What is this?

The Sentinel [at the top of the bank]. A man . . . over there . . . running off . . .

De Guiche [coming forward again]. It is a supposed Spanish spy. He is very useful to us. The information he carries to the enemy is that which I give him,—so that their decisions are influenced by us.

Cyrano. He is a scoundrel!

De Guiche [coolly tying on his scarf]. He is a convenience. We were saying? . . . Ah, I was about to tell you. Last

night, having resolved upon a desperate stroke to obtain supplies, the Marshal secretly set out for Dourlens. The royal sutlers are encamped there. He expects to join them by way of the tilled fields; but, to provide against interference, he took with him troops in such number that, certainly, if we were now attacked, the enemy would find easy work. Half of the army is absent from the camp.

Carbon. If the Spaniards knew that, it might be serious. But they do not know.

De Guiche. They do. And are going to attack us.

Carbon. Ah!

De Guiche. My pretended spy came to warn me of their intention. He said, moreover: I can direct the attack. At what point shall it be? I will lead them to suppose it the least strong, and they will centre their efforts against it. I answered: Very well. Go from the camp. Look down the line. Let them attack at the point I signal from.

Carbon [*to the CADETS*]. Gentlemen, get ready!

[*All get up. Noise of swords and belts being buckled on.*]

De Guiche. They will be here in an hour.

First Cadet. Oh! . . . if there is a whole hour! . . .

[*All sit down again, and go on with their games.*]

De Guiche [*to CARBON*]. The main object is to gain time. The Marshal is on his way back.

Carbon. And to gain time?

De Guiche. You will be so obliging as to keep them busy killing you.

Cyrano. Ah, this is your revenge!

De Guiche. I will not pretend that if I had been fond of you, I would have thus singled out you and yours; but, as your bravery is unquestionably beyond that of others, I am serving my King at the same time as my inclination.

Cyrano. Suffer me, monsieur, to express my gratitude.

De Guiche. I know that you affect fighting one against a hundred. You will not complain of lacking opportunity. [*He goes toward the back with CARBON.*]

Cyrano [*to the CADETS*]. We shall now be able, gentlemen, to add to the Gascon escutcheon, which bears, as it is, six chev-

rons, or and azure, the chevron that was wanting to complete it,—blood-red!

[*DE GUICHE at the back speaks low with CARBON. Orders are given. All is made ready to repel an attack. CYRANO goes toward CHRISTIAN, who stands motionless, with folded arms.*]

Cyrano [*laying his hand on CHRISTIAN'S shoulder*]. Christian?

Christian [*shaking his head*]. Roxane!

Cyrano. Ah me!

Christian. I wish I might at least put my whole heart's last blessing in a beautiful letter!

Cyrano. I mistrusted that it would come to-day . . . [*he takes a letter from his doublet*] and I have written your farewells.

Christian. Let me see!

Cyrano. You wish to see it? . . .

Christian [*taking the letter*]. Yes! [*He opens the letter, begins to read, stops short.*] Ah? . . .

Cyrano. What?

Christian. That little round blister?

Cyrano [*hurriedly taking back the letter, and looking at it with an artless air*]. A blister?

Christian. It is a tear!

Cyrano. It looks like one, does it not? . . . A poet, you see, is sometimes caught in his own snare,—that is what constitutes the interest, the charm! . . . This letter, you must know, is very touching. In writing it I apparently made myself shed tears.

Christian. Shed tears? . . .

Cyrano. Yes, because . . . well, to die is not terrible at all . . . but never to see her again, . . . never! . . . that, you know, is horrible beyond all thinking. . . . And things having taken the turn they have, I shall not see her . . . [*CHRISTIAN looks at him*] we shall not see her . . . [*hastily*] you will not see her. . . .

Christian [*snatching the letter from him*]. Give me the letter! [*Noise in the distance.*]

Voice of a Sentinel. Ventrebieu, who goes there?

[*Shots. Noise of voices, tinkling of bells.*]

Carbon. What is it?

The Sentinel [*on the top of the bank*]. A coach! [*All run to see.*]

[*Noisy exclamations.*] What?—In the camp?—It is driving into the camp!—It

comes from the direction of the enemy! The devil! Fire upon it!—No! the coachman is shouting something!—What does he say?—He shouts: Service of the King!

De Guiche. What? Service of the King?

[All come down from the bank and fall into order.]

Carbon. Hats off, all!

De Guiche *[at the corner]*. Service of the King! Stand back, low rabble, and give it room to turn around with a handsome sweep!

[The coach comes in at a trot. It is covered with mud and dust. The curtains are drawn. Two lackeys behind. It comes to a standstill.]

Carbon *[shouting]*. Salute!

[Drums roll. All the CADETS uncover.]

De Guiche. Let down the steps!

[Two men hurry forward. The coach door opens.]

Roxane *[stepping from the carriage]*. Good-morning!

[At the sound of a feminine voice, all the men, in the act of bowing low, straighten themselves. Consternation.]

De Guiche. Service of the King! You?

Roxane. Of the only King! . . . of Love!

Cyrano. Ah, great God!

Christian *[rushing to her]*. You! Why are you here?

Roxane. This siege lasted too long!

Christian. Why have you come?

Roxane. I will tell you!

Cyrano *[who at the sound of her voice has started, then stood motionless without venturing to look her way]*. God! . . . can I trust myself to look at her?

De Guiche. You cannot remain here.

Roxane. But I can,—I can, indeed! Will you favor me with a drum? *[She seats herself upon a drum brought forward for her.]* There! I thank you! *[She laughs.]* They fired upon my carriage. *[Proudly.]* A patrol!—It does look rather as if it were made out of a pumpkin, does it not? like Cinderella's coach! and the footmen made out of rats! *[Blowing a kiss to CHRISTIAN.]* How do you do? *[Looking at them all.]* You do not look overjoyed! . . . Arras is a long way from Paris, do you know

it? *[Catching sight of CYRANO.]* Cousin, delighted!

Cyrano *[coming toward her]*. But how did you . . . ?

Roxane. How did I find the army? Dear me, cousin, that was simple: I followed straight along the line of devastation. . . . Ah, I should never have believed in such horrors had I not seen them! Gentlemen, if that is the service of your King, I like mine better!

Cyrano. But this is mad! . . . By what way did you come?

Roxane. Way? . . . I drove through the Spaniards' camp.

First Cadet. Ah, what will keep lovely woman from her way!

De Guiche. But how did you contrive to get through their lines?

Le Bret. That must have been difficult . . .

Roxane. No, not very. I simply drove through them, in my coach, at a trot. If a hidalgo, with arrogant front, showed likely to stop us, I put my face at the window, wearing my sweetest smile, and, those gentlemen being,—let the French not grudge my saying so!—the most gallant in the world, . . . I passed!

Carbon. Such a smile is a passport, certainly! . . . But you must have been not unfrequently bidden to stand and deliver where you were going?

Roxane. Not unfrequently, you are right. Whereupon I would say, "I am going to see my lover!" At once, the fiercest looking Spaniard of them all would gravely close my carriage door; and, with a gesture the King might emulate, motion aside the musket-barrels levelled at me; and, superb at once for grace and haughtiness, bringing his spurs together, and lifting his plumed hat, bow low and say, "Pass, señorita, pass!"

Christian. But, Roxane . . .

Roxane. I said, "My lover!" yes, forgive me!—You see, if I had said, "My husband!" they would never have let me by!

Christian. But . . .

Roxane. What troubles you?

De Guiche. You must leave at once.

Roxane. I?

Cyrano. At once!

Le Bret. As fast as you can.

Christian. Yes, you must.

Roxane. But why?

Christian [embarrassed]. Because . . .
Cyrano [embarrassed too]. In three-quarters of an hour . . .

De Guiche [the same]. Or an hour . . .

Carbon [the same]. You had much better . . .

Le Bret [the same]. You might . . .

Roxane. I shall remain. You are going to fight.

All. Oh, no! . . . No!

Roxane. He is my husband! [*She throws herself in CHRISTIAN'S arms.*] Let me be killed with you!

Christian. How your eyes shine!

Roxane. I will tell you why they shine!

De Guiche [desperately]. It is a post of horrible probabilities!

Roxane [turning toward him]. What—of horrible? . . .

Cyrano. In proof of which he appointed us to it! . . .

Roxane. Ah, you wish me made a widow?

De Guiche. I swear to you . . .

Roxane. No! Now I have lost all regard. . . . Now I will surely not go. . . . Besides, I think it fun!

Cyrano. What? The précieuse contained a heroine?

Roxane. Monsieur de Bergerac, I am a cousin of yours!

One of the Cadets. Never think but that we will take good care of you!

Roxane [more and more excited]. I am sure you will, my friends!

Other Cadet. The whole camp smells of iris!

Roxane. By good fortune I put on a hat that will look well in battle! [*Glancing toward DE GUICHE.*] But perhaps it is time the Count should go.—The battle might begin.

De Guiche. Ah, it is intolerable!—I am going to inspect my guns, and coming back.—You still have time: think better of it!

Roxane. Never! [*Exit DE GUICHE.*]

Christian [imploring]. *Roxane!*

Roxane. No!

First Cadet. She is going to stay!

All [hurrying about, pushing one another, snatching things from one another]. A comb!—Soap!—My jacket is torn, a needle!—A ribbon!—Lend me your pocket-mirror—My cuffs!—Curling-irons!—A razor!

Roxane [to CYRANO, who is still pleading with her]. No! Nothing shall prevail upon me to stir from this spot!

Carbon [after having, like the others tightened his belt, dusted himself, brushed his hat, straightened his feather, pulled down his cuffs, approaches ROXANE, and ceremoniously]. It is, perhaps, proper, since you are going to stay, that I should present to you a few of the gentlemen about to have the honor of dying in your presence . . . [*ROXANE bows, and stands waiting, with her arm through CHRISTIAN'S.*] *Baron Peyrescous de Colignac!*

The Cadet [bowing]. *Madame!*

Carbon [continuing to present the CADETS]. *Baron de Casterac de Cahuzac, —Vidame de Maligny Estressac Lesbas d'Escarabiot, —Chevalier d'Antignac-Juzet, —Baron Hillot de Blagnac-Saléchan de Castel Crabioules . . .*

Roxane. But how many names have you apiece?

Baron Hillot. Innumerable!

Carbon [to ROXANE]. Open your hand with the handkerchief!

Roxane [opens her hand; the handkerchief drops]. Why?

[*The whole company starts forward to pick it up.*]

Carbon [instantly catching it]. My company had no flag! Now, my word, it will have the prettiest one in the army!

Roxane [smiling]. It is rather small.

Carbon [fastening the handkerchief on the staff of his captain's spear]. But it is lace!

One of the Cadets [to the others]. I could die without a murmur, having looked upon that beautiful face, if I had so much as a walnut inside me! . . .

Carbon [who has overheard, indignant]. Shame! . . . to talk of food when an exquisite woman . . .

Roxane. But the air of the camp is searching, and I myself am hungry: Patties, jellied meat, light wine . . . are what I should like best! Will you kindly bring me some? [*Consternation.*]

One of the Cadets. Bring you some?

Other Cadet. And where, great God, shall we get them?

Roxane [quietly]. In my coach.

All. What?

Roxane. But there is much to be done.

carving and boning and serving. Look more closely at my coachman, gentlemen, and you will recognize a precious individual: the sauces, if we wish, can be warmed over . . .

The Cadets [springing toward the coach]. It is Ragueneau! [Cheers.] Oh! Oh!

Roxane [watching them]. Poor fellows!

Cyrano [kissing her hand]. Kind fairy!

Ragueneau [standing upon the box-seat like a vender at a public fair]. Gentlemen! [Enthusiasm.]

The Cadets. Bravo! Bravo!

Ragueneau. How should the Spaniards, when so much beauty passed, suspect the repast? [Applause.]

Cyrano [low to CHRISTIAN]. Hm! Hm! Christian!

Ragueneau. Absorbed in gallantry, no heed took they . . . [he takes a dish from the box-seat] . . . of galantine!

[Applause. *The galantine is passed from hand to hand.*]

Cyrano [low to CHRISTIAN]. A word with you. . .

Ragueneau. Venus kept their eyes fixed upon herself, while Diana slipped past with the . . . [he brandishes a joint] game!

[Enthusiasm. *The joint is seized by twenty hands at once.*]

Cyrano [low to CHRISTIAN]. I must speak with you.

Roxane [to the CADETS who come forward, their arms full of provisions]. Spread it all upon the ground!

[Assisted by the two imperturbable footmen who were on the back of the coach, she arranges everything on the grass.]

Roxane [To CHRISTIAN, whom CYRANO is trying to draw aside]. Make yourself useful, sir!

[CHRISTIAN comes and helps her. CYRANO gives evidence of uneasiness.]

Ragueneau. A truffled peacock!

First Cadet [radiant, comes forward cutting off a large slice of ham]. Praise the pigs, we shall not go to our last fight with nothing in our b . . . [correcting himself at sight of ROXANE] hm . . . stomachs!

Ragueneau [flinging the carriage cushions]. The cushions are stuffed with snipe!

[Tumult. *The cushions are ripped open. Laughter. Joy.*]

Ragueneau [flinging bottles of red wine]. Molten ruby! [Bottles of white wine.] Fluid topaz!

Roxane [throwing a folded tablecloth to CYRANO]. Unfold the cloth: Hey! . . . be nimble!

Ragueneau [waving one of the coach lanterns]. Each lantern is a little larder!

Cyrano [low to CHRISTIAN, while together they spread the cloth]. I must speak with you before you speak with her . . .

Ragueneau. The handle of my whip, behold, is a sausage!

Roxane [pouring wine, dispensing it]. Since we are the ones to be killed, *morbleru*, we will not fret ourselves about the rest of the army! Everything for the Gascons! . . . And if De Guiche comes, nobody must invite him! [Going from one to the other.] Gently! You have time . . . You must not eat so fast! There, drink. What are you crying about?

First Cadet. It is too good!

Roxane. Hush! White wine or red?—Bread for Monsieur de Carbon!—A knife!—Pass your plate!—You prefer crust?—A little more?—Let me help you.—Champagne?—A wing?—

Cyrano [following ROXANE, his hands full of dishes, helping her]. I adore her!

Roxane [going to CHRISTIAN]. What will you take?

Christian. Nothing!

Roxane. Oh, but you must take something! This biscuit—in a little Muscatel—just a little?

Christian [trying to keep her from going]. Tell me what made you come?

Roxane. I owe myself to those poor fellows . . . Be patient, . . . By and by . . .

Le Bret [who had gone toward the back to pass a loaf of bread on the end of a pike to the SENTINEL upon the earthwork]. De Guiche!

Cyrano. Presto! Vanish basket, flagon, platter and pan! Hurry! Let us look as if nothing were! [To RAGUENEAU.] Take a flying leap on to your box!—Is everything hidden?

[In a wink, all the eatables have been pushed into the tents, or hidden under clothes, cloaks, hats.]

[Enter DE GUICHE, hurriedly; he

stops short, sniffing the air.
Silence.

De Guiche. What a good smell!

One of the Cadets [singing, with effect of mental abstraction]. To lo lo lo. . .

De Guiche [stopping and looking at him closely]. What is the matter with you—you, there? You are red as a crab.

The Cadet. I? Nothing . . . It is just my blood. . . We are going to fight: it tells . . .

Other Cadet. Poom . . . poom . . . poom . . .

De Guiche [turning]. What is this?

The Cadet [slightly intoxicated]. Nothing . . . A song . . . just a little song.

De Guiche. You look in good spirits, my boy!

The Cadet. Danger affects me that way!

De Guiche [calling CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX to give an order]. Captain, I . . . [He stops at sight of his face.] *Peste!* You look in good spirits, too.

Carbon [flushed, holding a bottle behind him; with an evasive gesture]. Oh! . . .

De Guiche. I had a cannon left over, which I have ordered them to place [he points in the wing] there, in that corner, and which your men can use, if necessary . . .

One of the Cadets [swaying from one foot to the other]. Charming attention!

Other Cadet [smiling sugarily]. Our thanks for your gracious thoughtfulness!

De Guiche. Have they gone mad? . . . [Drily.] As you are not accustomed to handling a cannon, look out for its kicking . . .

First Cadet. Ah, pfft! . . .

De Guiche [going toward him, furious]. But . . .

The Cadet. A cannon knows better than to kick a Gascon!

De Guiche [seizing him by the arm and shaking him]. You are all tipsy: on what?

The Cadet [magnificently]. The smell of powder!

De Guiche [shrugs his shoulders, pushes aside the CADET, and goes rapidly toward ROXANE]. Quick, Madame! what have you condescended to decide?

Roxane. I remain.

De Guiche. Retire, I beseech you!

Roxane. No.

De Guiche. If you are determined, then . . . Let me have a musket!

Carbon. What do you mean?

De Guiche. I, too, will remain.

Cyrano. At last, monsieur, an instance of pure and simple bravery!

First Cadet. Might you be a Gascon, lace collar notwithstanding?

De Guiche. I do not leave a woman in danger.

Second Cadet [to FIRST CADET]. Look here! I think he might be given something to eat!

[All the food reappears, as if by magic.]

De Guiche [his eyes brightening]. Provisions?

Third Cadet. Under every waistcoat!

De Guiche [mastering himself, haughtily]. Do you imagine that I will eat your leavings?

Cyrano [bowing]. You are improving!

De Guiche [proudly, falling at the last of the sentence into a slightly GASCON accent]. I will fight before I eat!

First Cadet [exultant]. Fight! Eat! . . . He spoke with an accent!

De Guiche [laughing]. I did?

The Cadet. He is one of us!

[All fall to dancing].

Carbon [who a moment before disappeared behind the earthworks, reappearing at the top]. I have placed my pikemen. They are a determined troop . . .

[He points at a line of pikes projecting above the bank.]

De Guiche [to ROXANE, bowing]. Will you accept my hand and pass them in review?

[She takes his hand; they go toward the bank. Everyone uncovers and follows.]

Christian [going to CYRANO, quickly]. Speak! Be quick!

[As ROXANE appears at the top of the bank, the pikes disappear, lowered in a salute, and a cheer goes up; ROXANE bows.]

Pikemen [outside]. Vivat!

Christian. What did you want to tell me?

Cyrano. In case ROXANE . . .

Christian. Well?

Cyrano. Should speak to you of the letters . . .

Christian. Yes, the letters. I know!

Cyrano. Do not commit the blunder of appearing surprised . . .

Christian. At what?

Cyrano. I must tell you! . . . It is quite simple, and merely comes into my mind to-day because I see her. You have . . .

Christian. Hurry!

Cyrano. You . . . you have written to her oftener than you suppose . . .

Christian. Oh, have I?

Cyrano. Yes. It was my business, you see. I had undertaken to interpret your passion, and sometimes I wrote without having told you I should write.

Christian. Ah?

Cyrano. It is very simple.

Christian. But how did you succeed since we have been so closely surrounded, in . . . ?

Cyrano. Oh, before daybreak I could cross the lines . . .

Christian [*folding his arms*]. Ah, that is very simple, too? . . . And how many times a week have I been writing? Twice? Three times? Four? . . .

Cyrano. More.

Christian. Every day?

Cyrano. Yes, every day . . . twice.

Christian [*violently*]. And you cared so much about it that you were willing to brave death . . .

Cyrano [*seeing ROXANE, who returns*]. Be still . . . Not before her!

[*He goes quickly into his tent.*

CADETS come and go at the back.

CARBON and DE GUICHE give orders.]

Roxane [*running to CHRISTIAN*]. And now, Christian . . .

Christian [*taking her hands*]. And now, you shall tell me why, over these fearful roads, through these ranks of rough soldiery, you risked your dear self to join me?

Roxane. Because of the letters!

Christian. The . . . ? What did you say?

Roxane. It is through your fault that I have been exposed to such and so many dangers. It is your letters that have gone to my head! Ah, think how many you have written me in a month, each one more beautiful . . .

Christian. What? . . . Because of a few little love letters . . .

Roxane. Say nothing! You cannot understand! Listen: The truth is that I took to idolizing you one evening, when below my window, in a voice I did not know before, your soul began to reveal itself. . . . Think then what the effect should be of

your letters, which have been like your voice heard constantly for one month, your voice of that evening, so tender, caressing . . . You must bear it as you can, I have come to you! Prudent Penelope would not have stayed at home with her eternal tapestry, if Ulysses, her lord, had written as you write . . . but, impulsive as Helen, have tossed aside her yarns, and flown to join him!

Christian. But . . .

Roxane. I read them, I re-read them, in reading I grew faint . . . I became your own indeed! Each fluttering leaf was like a petal of your soul wafted to me. . . . In every word of those letters, love is felt as a flame would be felt,—love, compelling, sincere, profound . . .

Christian. Ah, sincere, profound? . . . You say that it can be felt, Roxane?

Roxane. He asks me!

Christian. And so you came? . . .

Roxane. I came—oh, Christian, my own, my master! If I were to kneel at your feet you would lift me, I know. It is my soul therefore which kneels, and never can you lift it from that posture!—I came to implore your pardon—as it is fitting, for we are both perhaps about to die!—your pardon for having done you the wrong, at first, in my shallowness, of loving you . . . for mere looking!

Christian [*in alarm*]. Ah, Roxane! . . .

Roxane. Later, dear one, grown less shallow—similar to a bird which flutters before it can fly,—your gallant exterior appealing to me still, but your soul appealing equally, I loved you for both! . . .

Christian. And now?

Roxane. Now at last yourself are vanquished by yourself: I love you for your soul alone . . .

Christian [*drawing away*]. Ah, Roxane!

Roxane. Rejoice! For to be loved for that wherewith we are clothed so fleetingly must put a noble heart to torture. . . . Your dear thought at last casts your dear face in shadow: the harmonious lineaments whereby at first you pleased me, I do not see them, now my eyes are open!

Christian. Oh!

Roxane. You question your own triumph?

Christian [*sorrowfully*], Roxane!

Roxane. I understand, you cannot conceive of such a love in me?

Christian. I do not wish to be loved like that! I wish to be loved quite simply . . .

Roxane. For that which other women till now have loved in you? Ah, let yourself be loved in a better way.

Christian. No. . . . I was happier before! . . .

Roxane. Ah, you do not understand! It is now that I love you most, that I truly love you. It is that which makes you, you—can you not grasp it?—that I worship. . . . And did you no longer walk our earth like a young martial Apollo . . .

Christian. Say no more!

Roxane. Still would I love you! . . . Yes, though a blight should have fallen upon your face and form . . .

Christian. Do not say it!

Roxane. But I do say it, . . . I do!

Christian. What? If I were ugly, distinctly, offensively?

Roxane. If you were ugly, dear, I swear it!

Christian. God!

Roxane. And you are glad, profoundly glad?

Christian [in a smothered voice]. Yes . . .

Roxane. What is it?

Christian [pushing her gently away]. Nothing. I have a word or two to say to someone: your leave, for a second . . .

Roxane. But . . .

Christian [pointing at a group of CADETS at the back]. In my selfish love, I have kept you from those poor brothers. . . . Go, smile on them a little, before they die, dear . . . go!

Roxane [moved]. Dear Christian!

[She goes toward the GASCONS at the back; they respectfully gather around her.]

Christian [calling toward CYRANO'S tent]. Cyrano!

Cyrano [appears, armed for battle]. What is it? . . . How pale you are!

Christian. She does not love me any more!

Cyrano. What do you mean?

Christian. She loves you.

Cyrano. No!

Christian. She only loves my soul!

Cyrano. No!

Christian. Yes! Therefore it is you she loves . . . and you love her . . .

Cyrano. I . . .

Christian. I know it!

Cyrano. It is true.

Christian. To madness!

Cyrano. More.

Christian. Tell her, then.

Cyrano. No!

Christian. Why not?

Cyrano. Look at me!

Christian. She would love me grown ugly.

Cyrano. She told you so?

Christian. With the utmost frankness!

Cyrano. Ah! I am glad she should have told you that! But, believe me, believe me, place no faith in such a mad asseveration! Dear God, I am glad such a thought should have come to her, and that she should have spoken it,—but believe me, do not take her at her word: Never cease to be the handsome fellow you are. . . . She would not forgive me!

Christian. That is what I wish to discover.

Cyrano. No! no!

Christian. Let her choose between us! You shall tell her everything.

Cyrano. No . . . No . . . I refuse the ordeal!

Christian. Shall I stand in the way of your happiness because my outside is not so much amiss?

Cyrano. And I? shall I destroy yours, because, thanks to the hazard that sets us upon earth, I have the gift of expressing . . . what you perhaps feel?

Christian. You shall tell her everything!

Cyrano. He persists in tempting me. . . . It is a mistake . . . and cruel!

Christian. I am weary of carrying about, in my own self, a rival!

Cyrano. Christian!

Christian. Our marriage . . . contracted without witnesses . . . can be annulled . . . if we survive!

Cyrano. He persists!

Christian. Yes. I will be loved for my sole self, or not at all!—I am going to see what they are about. Look! I will walk to the end of the line and back. . . . Tell her, and let her pronounce between us.

Cyrano. She will pronounce for you.

Christian. I can but hope she will!
[calling] Roxane!

Cyrano. No! No!

Roxane [coming forward]. What is it?

Christian. Cyrano has something to tell you . . . something important!

[ROXANE goes hurriedly to CYRANO. Exit CHRISTIAN.]

Roxane. Something important?

Cyrano [distracted]. He is gone! . . .
[To ROXANE]. Nothing whatever! He attaches—but you must know him of old!—he attaches importance to trifles. . . .

Roxane [quickly]. He did not believe what I told him a moment ago? . . . I saw that he did not believe . . .

Cyrano [taking her hand]. But did you in very truth tell him the truth?

Roxane. Yes. Yes. I should love him even . . . [She hesitates a second.]

Cyrano [smiling sadly]. You do not like to say it before me?

Roxane. But . . .

Cyrano. I shall not mind! . . . Even if he were ugly?

Roxane. Yes . . . Ugly. [Musket shots outside.] They are firing!

Cyrano [ardently]. Dreadfully ugly?

Roxane. Dreadfully.

Cyrano. Disfigured?

Roxane. Disfigured!

Cyrano. Grotesque?

Roxane. Nothing could make him grotesque . . . to me.

Cyrano. You would love him still?

Roxane. I believe that I should love him more . . . if that were possible!

Cyrano [losing his head, aside]. My God, perhaps she means it . . . perhaps it is true . . . and that way is happiness [To ROXANE.] I . . . Roxane . . . listen!

Le Bret [comes in hurriedly; calls softly].
Cyrano!

Cyrano [turning]. *Hein?*

Le Bret. Hush! [He whispers a few words to CYRANO.]

CYRANO [letting ROXANE'S hand drop, with a cry]. Ah! . . .

Roxane. What ails you?

Cyrano [to himself, in consternation]. It is finished! [Musket reports.]

Roxane. What is it? What is happening? Who is firing?

[She goes to the back to look off.]

Cyrano. It is finished. . . . My lips are sealed forevermore!

[CADETS come in, attempting to conceal something they carry among them; they surround it, preventing ROXANE'S seeing it.]

Roxane. What has happened?

Cyrano [quickly stopping her as she starts toward them]. Nothing!

Roxane. These men? . . .

Cyrano [drawing her away]. Pay no attention to them!

Roxane. But what were you about to say to me before?

Cyrano. What was I about to say? . . . Oh, nothing! . . . Nothing whatever, I assure you. [Solemnly.] I swear that Christian's spirit, that his soul, were . . . [in terror, correcting himself] are the greatest that . . .

Roxane. Were? . . . [With a great cry.] Ah! . . .

[Runs to the group of CADETS, and thrusts them aside.]

Cyrano. It is finished!

Roxane [seeing CHRISTIAN stretched out in his cloak]. Christian!

Le Bret [to CYRANO]. At the enemy's first shot!

[ROXANE throws herself on CHRISTIAN'S body. Musket reports. Clashing of swords. Tramping. Drums.]

Carbon [sword in hand]. The attack! To your muskets!

[Followed by the CADETS he goes to the further side of the earthworks.]

Roxane. Christian!

Carbon's Voice [beyond the earthworks]. Make haste!

Roxane. Christian!

Carbon. Fall into line!

Roxane. Christian!

Carbon. Measure . . . match!

[RAGUENEAU has come running in with water in a steel cap.]

Christian [in a dying voice]. Roxane!

Cyrano [quick, low in CHRISTIAN'S ear, while ROXANE, distracted, dips into the water a fragment of linen torn from her breast to bind his wound]. I have told her everything! . . . You are still the one she loves! [CHRISTIAN closes his eyes.]

Roxane. What, dear love?

Carbon. Muzzle . . . high!

Roxane [to CYRANO]. He is not dead? . . .

Carbon. Open charge . . . with teeth!

Roxane. I feel his cheek grow cold against my own!

Carbon. Take aim!

Roxane. A letter on his breast. . . . [She opens it.] To me!

Cyrano [aside]. My letter!

Carbon. Fire!

[Musket shots. Cries. Roar of battle.]

Cyrano [trying to free his hand which ROXANE clasps kneeling]. But, Roxane, they are fighting.

Roxane [clinging]. No! . . . Stay with me a little! . . . He is dead. You are the only one that truly knew him . . . [She cries subduedly.] Was he not an exquisite being, . . . an exceptional, marvellous being? . . .

Cyrano [standing bareheaded]. Yes, Roxane.

Roxane. A poet without his peer, . . . one verily to reverence?

Cyrano. Yes, Roxane.

Roxane. A sublime spirit?

Cyrano. Yes, Roxane.

Roxane. A profound heart, such as the profane could never have understood . . . a soul as noble as it was charming? . . .

Cyrano [firmly]. Yes, Roxane.

Roxane [throwing herself on CHRISTIAN'S body]. And he is dead!

Cyrano [aside, drawing his sword]. And I have now only to die, since, without knowing it, she mourns my death in his!

[Trumpets in the distance.]

De Guiche [reappears on the top of the bank, bareheaded, his forehead bloody; in a thundering voice]. The signal they promised! The flourish of trumpets! . . . The French are entering the camp with supplies! . . . Stand fast a little longer!

Roxane. Upon his letter . . . blood, . . . tears!

A Voice [outside, shouting]. Surrender! Voices of the Cadets. No!

Ragueneau [who from the top of the coach is watching the battle beyond the bank]. The conflict rages hotter! . . .

Cyrano [to DE GUICHE pointing at ROXANE]. Take her away! . . . I am going to charge.

Roxane [kissing the letter, in a dying voice]. His blood! . . . his tears!

Ragueneau [leaping from the coach and running to ROXANE]. She is fainting!

De Guiche [at the top of the bank, to the CADETS, madly]. Stand fast!

Voice [outside]. Surrender!

Voices of the Cadets. No!

Cyrano [to DE GUICHE]. Your courage none will question . . . [Pointing at ROXANE.] Fly for the sake of saving her!

De Guiche [runs to ROXANE and lifts her in his arms]. So be it! But we shall win the day if you can hold out a little longer . . .

Cyrano. We can. [To ROXANE, whom DE GUICHE, helped by RAGUENEAU, is carrying off insensible.] Good-bye, Roxane!

[Tumult. Cries. CADETS reappear, wounded, and fall upon the stage. CYRANO dashing forward to join the combatants is stopped on the crest of the bank by CARBON covered with blood.]

Carbon. We are losing ground . . . I have got two halberd wounds . . .

Cyrano [yelling to the GASCONS]. Steadfast! . . . Never give them an inch! . . . Brave boys! [To CARBON.] Fear nothing! I have various deaths to avenge: Christian's and all my hopes! [They come down. CYRANO brandishes the spear at the head of which ROXANE'S handkerchief is fastened.] Float free, little cobweb flag, embroidered with her initials! [He drives the spear-staff into the earth; shouts to the CADETS.] Fall on them, boys! . . . Crush them! [To the fifer.] Fifer, play!

[The fifer plays. Some of the wounded get to their feet again. Some of the CADETS, coming down the bank, group themselves around CYRANO and the little flag. The coach, filled and covered with men, bristles with muskets and becomes a redoubt.]

One of the Cadets [appears upon the top of the bank backing while he fights; he cries]. They are coming up the slope!

[Falls dead.]

Cyrano. We will welcome them!

[Above the bank suddenly rises a formidable array of enemies. The great banners of the Imperial Army appear.]

Cyrano. Fire! [General discharge.]
Cry [among the hostile ranks]. Fire!
 [Shots returned. CADETS drop on every side.]

A Spanish Officer [taking off his hat].
 What are these men, so determined all to be killed?

Cyrano [declaiming, as he stands in the midst of flying bullets].

*They are the Gascony Cadets
 Of Carbon de Castel-Jaloux;
 Famed fighters, liars, desperates . . .*

[He leaps forward, followed by a handful of survivors.]

They are the Gascony Cadets! . . .
 [The rest is lost in the confusion of battle.]

ACT FIVE

CYRANO'S GAZETTE

Fifteen years later, 1655. The park belonging to the convent of the Sisters of the Cross, in Paris.

Superb shade-trees. At the left, the house; several doors opening on to broad terrace with steps. In the centre of the stage, huge trees standing alone in a clear oval space. At the right, first wing, a semi-circular stone seat, surrounded by large box-trees.

All along the back of the stage, an avenue of chestnut-trees, which leads, at the right, fourth wing, to the door of a chapel seen through trees. Through the double row of trees overarching the avenue are seen lawns, other avenues, clumps of trees, the further recesses of the park, the sky.

The chapel opens by a small side-door into a colonnade, overrun by a scarlet creeper; the colonnade comes forward and is lost to sight behind the box-trees at the right.

It is Autumn. The leaves are turning, above the still fresh grass. Dark patches of evergreens, box and yew. Under each tree a mat of yellow leaves. Fallen leaves litter the whole stage, crackle underfoot, lie thick on the terrace and the seats.

Between the seat at the right and the tree in the centre, a large embroidery frame, in front of which a small chair. Baskets full of wools, in skeins and balls. On the frame, a piece of tapestry, partly done.

At the rise of the curtain, nuns come and go in the park; a few are seated on the stone seat around an older nun; leaves are falling.

Sister Martha [to MOTHER MARGARET].
Sister Claire, after putting on her cap, went back to the mirror, to see herself again.

Mother Margaret [to SISTER CLAIRE]. It was unbecoming, my child.

Sister Claire. But *Sister Martha*, to-day, after finishing her portion, went back to the tart for a plum. I saw her!

Mother Margaret [to SISTER MARTHA].
 My child, it was ill done.

Sister Claire. I merely glanced! . . .

Sister Martha. The plum was about so big! . . .

Mother Margaret. This evening when *Monsieur Cyrano* comes, I will tell him.

Sister Claire [alarmed]. No! He will laugh at us!

Sister Martha. He will say that nuns are very vain!

Sister Claire. And very greedy!

Mother Margaret. And really very good.

Sister Claire. *Mother Margaret*, is it not true that he has come here every Saturday in the last ten years?

Mother Margaret. Longer! Ever since his cousin brought among our linen coifs her coif of crape, the worldly symbol of her mourning, which settled like a sable bird amidst our flock of white some fourteen years ago.

Sister Martha. He alone, since she took her abode in our cloister, has art to dispel her never-lessening sorrow.

All the Nuns. He is so droll!—It is merry when he comes!—He teases us!—He is delightful!—We are greatly attached to him!—We are making *Angelica* paste to offer him!

Sister Martha. He is not, however, a very good Catholic!

Sister Claire. We will convert him.

The Nuns. We will! We will!

Mother Margaret. I forbid your renewing that attempt, my children. Do not trouble him; he might not come so often!

Sister Martha. But . . . God!

Mother Margaret. Set your hearts at rest: God must know him of old!

Sister Martha. But every Saturday, when

he comes, he says to me as soon as he sees me, "Sister, I ate meat, yesterday!"

Mother Margaret. Ah, that is what he says? . . . Well, when he last said it, he had eaten nothing for two days.

Sister Martha. Mother!

Mother Margaret. He is poor.

Sister Martha. Who told you?

Mother Margaret. Monsieur Le Bret.

Sister Martha. Does no one offer him assistance?

Mother Margaret. No, he would take offence.

[In one of the avenues at the back appears ROXANE, in black, wearing a widow's coif and long mourning veil; DE GUICHE, markedly older, magnificently dressed, walks beside her. They go very slowly. MOTHER MARGARET gets up.]

Mother Margaret. Come, we must go within. Madame Magdeleine is walking in the park with a visitor.

Sister Martha *[low to SISTER CLAIRE].* Is not that the Marshal-duke de Grammont?

Sister Claire *[looking].* I think it is!

Sister Martha. He has not been to see her in many months!

The Nuns. He is much engaged!—The Court!—The Camp!—

Sister Claire. Cares of this world!

[Exeunt. DE GUICHE and ROXANE come forward silently, and stop near the embroidery frame. A pause.]

De Guiche. And so you live here, uselessly fair, always in mourning?

Roxane. Always.

De Guiche. As faithful as of old?

Roxane. As faithful.

De Guiche *[after a time].* Have you forgiven me?

Roxane. Since I am here.

De Guiche. And he was really such a rare being?

Roxane. To understand, one must have known him!

De Guiche. Ah, one must have known him! . . . Perhaps I did not know him well enough. And his last letter, still and always, against your heart?

Roxane. I wear it on this velvet, as a more holy scapular.

De Guiche. Even dead, you love him?

Roxane. It seems to me sometimes he is but half dead, that our hearts have not been severed, that his love still wraps me round, no less than ever living!

De Guiche *[after another silence].* Does Cyrano come here to see you?

Roxane. Yes, often. That faithful friend fulfils by me the office of gazette. His visits are regular. He comes: when the weather is fine, his armchair is brought out under the trees. I wait for him here with my work; the hour strikes; on the last stroke, I hear—I do not even turn to see who comes!—his cane upon the steps; he takes his seat; he rallies me upon my never-ending tapestry; he tells off the events of the week, and . . . *[LE BRET appears on the steps.]* Ah, Le Bret! *[LE BRET comes down the steps.]* How does your friend?

Le Bret. Ill.

De Guiche. Oh!

Roxane. He exaggerates! . . .

Le Bret. All is come to pass as I foretold: neglect! poverty! his writings ever breeding him new enemies! Fraud he attacks in every embodiment: usurpers, pious pretenders, plagiarists, asses in lions' skins . . . all! He attacks all!

Roxane. No one, however, but stands in profound respect of his sword. They will never succeed in silencing him.

De Guiche *[shaking his head].* Who knows?

Le Bret. What I fear is not the aggression of man; what I fear is loneliness and want and winter creeping upon him like stealthy wolves in his miserable attic; they are the insidious foes that will have him by the throat at last! . . . Every day he tightens his belt by an eyelet; his poor great nose is pinched, and turned the sal-low of old ivory; the worn black serge you see him in is the only coat he has!

De Guiche. Ah, there is one who did not succeed! . . . Nevertheless, do not pity him too much.

Le Bret *[with a bitter smile].* Marshal! . . .

De Guiche. Do not pity him too much: he signed no bonds with the world; he has lived free in his thought as in his actions.

Le Bret *[as above].* Duke . . .

De Guiche *[haughtily].* I know, yes: I

have everything, he has nothing. . . . But I should like to shake hands with him. [*Bowing to ROXANE.*] Good-bye.

Roxane. I will go with you to the door.

[*DE GUICHE bows to LE BRET and goes with ROXANE toward the terrace steps.*]

De Guiche [*stopping while she goes up the steps*]. Yes, sometimes I envy him. You see, when a man has succeeded too well in life, he is not unlikely to feel—dear me! without having committed any very serious wrong!—a multitudinous disgust of himself, the sum of which does not constitute a real remorse, but an obscure uneasiness; and a ducal mantle, while it sweeps up the stairs of greatness, may trail in its furry lining a rustling of sere illusions and regrets, as, when you slowly climb toward those doors, your black gown trails the withered leaves.

Roxane [*ironical*]. Are you not unusually pensive? . . .

De Guiche. Ah, yes! [*As he is about to leave, abruptly.*] Monsieur Le Bret [*To ROXANE.*] Will you allow me? A word. [*He goes to LE BRET, and lowering his voice.*] It is true that no one will dare overtly to attack your friend, but many have him in particular disrelish; and some one was saying to me yesterday, at the Queen's, "It seems not unlikely that this Cyrano will meet with an accident."

Le Bret. Ah? . . .

De Guiche. Yes. Let him keep indoors. Let him be cautious.

Le Bret [*lifting his arms toward Heaven*]. Cautious! . . . He is coming here. I will warn him. Warn him! . . . Yes, but . . .

Roxane [*who has been standing at the head of the steps, to a nun who comes toward her*]. What is it?

The Nun. Raguenau begs to see you, Madame.

Roxane. Let him come in. [*To DE GUICHE and LE BRET*]. He comes to plead distress. Having determined one day to be an author, he became in turn precen-

tor . . .

Le Bret. Bath-house keeper . . .

Roxane. Actor . . .

Le Bret. Beadle . . .

Roxane. Barber . . .

Le Bret. Arch-lute teacher . . .

Roxane. I wonder what he is now!

Raguenau [*entering precipitately*]. Ah, madame! [*He sees LE BRET.*] Monsieur!

Roxane [*smiling*]. Begin telling your misfortunes to Le Bret. I am coming back.

Raguenau. But, madame . . .

[*ROXANE leaves without listening, with the DUKE.* RAGUENEAU goes to LE BRET.]

Raguenau. It is better so. Since you are here, I had liefer not tell her! Less than half an hour ago, I was going to see your friend. I was not thirty feet from his door, when I saw him come out. I hurried to catch up with him. He was about to turn the corner. I started to run, when from a window below which he was passing—was it pure mischance? It may have been!—a lackey drops a block of wood . . .

Le Bret. Ah, the cowards! . . . Cyrano!

Raguenau. I reach the spot, and find him . . .

Le Bret. Horrible!

Raguenau. Our friend, monsieur, our poet, stretched upon the ground, with a great hole in his head!

Le Bret. He is dead?

Raguenau. No, but . . . God have mercy! I carried him to his lodging . . . Ah, his lodging! You should see that lodging of his!

Le Bret. Is he in pain?

Raguenau. No, monsieur, he is unconscious.

Le Bret. Has a doctor seen him?

Raguenau. One came . . . out of good nature.

Le Bret. My poor, poor Cyrano! . . . We must not tell Roxane outright. And the doctor? . . .

Raguenau. He talked . . . I hardly grasped . . . of fever . . . cerebral inflammation! Ah, if you should see him, with his head done up in cloths! . . . Let us hurry . . . No one is there to tend him . . . And he might die if he attempted to get up!

Le Bret [*dragging RAGUENEAU off at the right*]. This way. Come, it is shorter through the chapel.

Roxane [*appearing at the head of the steps, catching sight of LE BRET hurrying off through the colonnade which leads to the chapel side-door*]. Monsieur Le Bret! [*LE BRET and RAGUENEAU make their escape without answering.*] Le Bret not turn-

ing back when he is called? . . . Poor Ragueneau must be in some new trouble! [*She comes down the steps.*] How beautiful . . . how beautiful, this golden-hazy waning day of September at its wane! My sorrowful mood, which the exuberant gladness of April offends, Autumn, the dreamy and subdued, lures on to smile . . . [*She sits down at her embroidery frame. Two NUNS come from the house bringing a large armchair which they place under the tree.*] Ah, here comes the classic armchair in which my old friend always sits!

Sister Martha. The best in the convent parlor!

Roxane. I thank you, sister. [*The nuns withdraw.*] He will be here in a moment. [*She adjusts the embroidery frame before her.*] There! The clock is striking . . . My woofs! . . . The clock has struck? . . . I wonder at this! . . . Is it possible that for the first time he is late? . . . It must be that the sister who keeps the door . . . my thimble? ah, here it is! . . . is detaining him to exhort him to repentance . . . [*A pause.*] She exhorts him at some length! . . . He cannot be much longer . . . A withered leaf! [*She brushes away the dead leaf which has dropped on the embroidery.*] Surely nothing could keep . . . My scissors? . . . in my work-bag! . . . could keep him from coming!

A Nun [*appearing at the head of the steps.*] Monsieur de Bergerac!

Roxane [*without turning round.*] What was I saying? . . . [*She begins to embroider.*] CYRANO appears, exceedingly pale, his hat drawn down over his eyes. The NUN who has shown him into the garden, withdraws. He comes down the steps very slowly, with evident difficulty to keep on his feet, leaning heavily on his cane. ROXANE proceeds with her sewing. Ah, these dull soft shades! . . . How shall I match them? [*To CYRANO, in a tone of friendly chiding.*] After fourteen years, for the first time you are late!

Cyrano [*who has reached the armchair and seated himself, in a jolly voice which contrasts with his face.*] Yes, it seems incredible! I am savage at it. I was detained, spite of all I could do! . . .

Roxane. By? . . .

Cyrano. A somewhat inopportune call.

Roxane [*absent-minded, sewing.*] Ah, yes . . . some troublesome fellow!

Cyrano. Cousin, it was a troublesome Madam.

Roxane. You excused yourself?

Cyrano. Yes. I said, "Your pardon, but this is Saturday, on which day I am due in a certain dwelling. On no account do I ever fail. Come back in an hour!"

Roxane [*lightly*]. Well, she will have to wait some time to see you. I shall not let you go before evening.

Cyrano. Perhaps . . . I shall have to go a little earlier.

[*He closes his eyes and is silent a moment. SISTER MARTHA is seen crossing the park from the chapel to the terrace. ROXANE sees her and beckons to her by a slight motion of her head.*]

Roxane [*to CYRANO*]. Are you not going to tease Sister Martha to-day?

Cyrano [*quickly, opening his eyes*]. I am indeed! [*In a comically gruff voice.*] Sister Martha, come nearer! [*The Nun demurely comes toward him.*] Ha! ha! ha! Beautiful eyes, ever studying the ground!

Sister Martha [*lifting her eyes and smiling*]. But . . . [*She sees his face and makes a gesture of surprise.*] Oh!

Cyrano [*low, pointing at ROXANE*]. Hush! . . . It is nothing! [*In a swaggering voice, aloud.*] Yesterday, I ate meat!

Sister Martha. I am sure you did! [*Aside.*] That is why he is so pale! [*Quickly, low.*] Come to the refectory presently. I shall have ready for you there a good bowl of broth . . . You will come!

Cyrano. Yes, yes, yes.

Sister Martha. Ah, you are more reasonable to-day!

Roxane [*hearing them whisper*]. She is trying to convert you?

Sister Martha. Indeed I am not!

Cyrano. It is true, you, usually almost discursive in the holy cause, are reading me no sermon! You amaze me! [*With comical fury.*] I will amaze you, too! Listen, you are authorized . . . [*With the air of casting about in his mind, and finding the jest he wants.*] Ah, now I shall amaze you! to . . . pray for me, this evening . . . in the chapel.

Roxane. Oh! oh!

Cyrano [*laughing*]. Sister Martha . . . lost in amazement!

Sister Martha [*gently*]. I did not wait for your authorization. [*She goes in.*]

Cyrano [*turning to ROXANE, who is bending over her embroidery*]. The devil, tapestry . . . the devil, if I hope to live to see the end of you!

Roxane. I was waiting for that jest.

[*A slight gust of wind makes the leaves fall.*]

Cyrano. The leaves!

Roxane [*looking up from her work and gazing off toward the avenues*]. They are the russet gold of a Venetian beauty's hair . . . Watch them fall!

Cyrano. How consummately they do it! In that brief fluttering from bough to ground, how they contrive still to put beauty! And though foredoomed to moulder upon the earth that draws them, they wish their fall invested with the grace of a free bird's flight!

Roxane. Serious, you?

Cyrano [*remembering himself*]. Not at all, Roxane!

Roxane. Come, never mind the falling leaves! Tell me the news, instead . . . Where is my budget?

Cyrano. Here it is!

Roxane. Ah!

Cyrano [*growing paler and paler, and struggling with pain*]. Saturday, the nineteenth: The king having filled his dish eight times with Cette preserves, and emptied it, was taken with a fever; his distemper, for high treason, was condemned to be let blood, and now the royal pulse is rid of febriculousity! On Sunday: at the Queen's great ball, were burned seven hundred and sixty-three wax candles; our troops, it is said, defeated Austrian John; four sorcerers were hanged; Madame Athis's little dog had a distressing turn, the case called for a . . .

Roxane. Monsieur de Bergerac, leave out the little dog!

Cyrano. Monday, . . . nothing, or next to it; Lygdamire took a fresh lover.

Roxane. Oh!

Cyrano [*lover whose face is coming a change more and more marked*]. Tuesday: the whole Court assembled at Fontainebleau. Wednesday, the fair Monglat said to Count Fiesco "No!" Thursday, Man-

cini, Queen of France, . . . or little less. Twenty-fifth, the fair Monglat said to Count Fiesco "Yes!" And Saturday, the twenty-sixth . . . [*He closes his eyes. His head drops on his breast. Silence.*]

Roxane [*surprised at hearing nothing further, turns, looks at him and starts to her feet in alarm*]. Has he fainted? [*She runs to him, calling.*] Cyrano!

Cyrano [*opening his eyes, in a faint voice*]. What is it? . . . What is the matter! [*He sees ROXANE bending over him, hurriedly readjusts his hat, pulling it more closely over his head, and shrinks back in his armchair in terror.*] No! no! I assure you, it is nothing! . . . Do not mind me!

Roxane. But surely . . .

Cyrano. It is merely the wound I received at Arras . . . Sometimes . . . you know . . . even now . . .

Roxane. Poor friend!

Cyrano. But it is nothing . . . It will pass . . . [*He smiles with effort.*] It has passed.

Roxane. Each one of us has his wound: I too have mine. It is here, never to heal, that ancient wound . . . [*She places her hand on her breast.*] It is here, beneath the yellowing letter on which are still faintly visible tear-drops and drops of blood!

[*The light is beginning to grow less.*]

Cyrano. His letter? . . . Did you not once say that some day . . . you might show it to me?

Roxane. Ah! . . . Do you wish? . . . His letter?

Cyrano. Yes . . . to-day . . . I wish to . . .

Roxane [*handing him the little bag from her neck*]. Here!

Cyrano. I may open it?

Roxane. Open it . . . read!

[*She goes back to her embroidery frame, folds it up, orders her wools.*]

Cyrano. "Good-bye, Roxane! I am going to die!"

Roxane [*stopping in astonishment*]. You are reading it aloud?

Cyrano [*reading*]. "It is fated to come this evening, beloved, I believe! My soul is heavy, oppressed with love it had not time to utter . . . and now Time is at

end! Never again, never again shall my worshipping eyes . . ."

Roxane. How strangely you read his letter!

Cyrano [continuing]. "... whose passionate revel it was, kiss in its fleeting grace your every gesture. One, usual to you, of tucking back a little curl, comes to my mind . . . and I cannot refrain from crying out . . ."

Roxane. How strangely you read his letter! . . .

[The darkness gradually increases.]

Cyrano. "and I cry out: Good-bye!"

Roxane. You read it . . .

Cyrano. "my dearest, my darling, . . . my treasure . . ."

Roxane. . . in a voice . . .

Cyrano. "... my love! . . ."

Roxane. . . in a voice . . . a voice which I am not hearing for the first time!

[ROXANE comes quietly nearer to him, without his seeing it; she steps behind his armchair, bends noiselessly over his shoulder, looks at the letter. The darkness deepens.]

Cyrano. "... My heart never desisted for a second from your side . . . and I am and shall be in the world that has no end, the one who loved you without measure, the one . . ."

Roxane [laying her hand on his shoulder]. How can you go on reading? It is dark. [CYRANO starts, and turns round; sees her close to him, makes a gesture of dismay and hangs his head. Then, in the darkness which has completely closed round them, she says slowly, clasping her hands.] And he, for fourteen years, has played the part of the comical old friend who came to cheer me!

Cyrano. Roxane!

Roxane. So it was you.

Cyrano. No, no, Roxane!

Roxane. I ought to have divined it, if only by the way in which he speaks my name!

Cyrano. No, it was not I!

Roxane. So it was you!

Cyrano. I swear to you . . .

Roxane. Ah, I detect at last the whole generous imposture: The letters . . . were yours!

Cyrano. No!

Roxane. The tender fancy, the dear folly, . . . yours!

Cyrano. No!

Roxane. The voice in the night, was yours!

Cyrano. I swear to you that it was not!

Roxane. The soul . . . was yours!

Cyrano. I did not love you, no!

Roxane. And you loved me!

Cyrano. Not I . . . it was the other!

Roxane. You loved me!

Cyrano. No!

Roxane. Already your denial comes more faintly!

Cyrano. No, no, my darling love, I did not love you!

Roxane. Ah, how many things within the hour have died . . . how many have been born! Why, why have . . . been silent these long years, when on this letter, in which he had no part, the tears were yours?

Cyrano [handing her the letter]. Because . . . the blood was his.

Roxane. Then why let the sublime bond of this silence be loosed to-day?

Cyrano. Why?

[LE BRET and RAGUENEAU enter running.]

Le Bret. Madness! Monstrous madness! . . . Ah, I was sure of it! There he is!

Cyrano [smiling and straightening himself]. Tiens! Where else?

Le Bret. Madame, he is likely to have got his death by getting out of bed!

Roxane. Merciful God! A moment ago, then . . . that faintness . . . that . . . ?

Cyrano. It is true. I had not finished telling you the news. And on Saturday, the twenty-sixth, an hour after sundown, Monsieur de Bergerac died of murder done upon him. [He takes off his hat; his head is seen wrapped in bandages.]

Roxane. What is he saying? . . . Cyrano? . . . Those bandages about his head? . . . Ah, what have they done to you? . . . Why? . . .

Cyrano. "Happy who falls, cut off by a hero, with an honest sword through his heart!" I am quoting from myself! . . . Fate will have his laugh at us! . . . Here am I killed, in a trap, from behind, by a lackey, with a log! Nothing could be completer! In my whole life I shall have

not had anything I wanted . . . not even a decent death!

Ragueneau. Ah, monsieur! . . .

Cyrano. Ragueneau, do not sob like that! [*Holding out his hand to him.*] And what is the news with you, these latter days, fellow-poet?

Ragueneau [*through his tears*]. I am candle-snuffer at Molière's theatre.

Cyrano. Molière!

Ragueneau. But I intend to leave no later than to-morrow. Yes, I am indignant! Yesterday, they were giving Scapin, and I saw that he has appropriated a scene of yours.

Le Bret. A whole scene?

Ragueneau. Yes, monsieur. The one in which occurs the famous "What the devil was he doing in . . ."

Le Bret. Molière has taken that from you!

Cyrano. Hush! hush! He did well to take it! [*To RAGUENEAU.*] The scene was very effective, was it not?

Ragueneau. Ah, monsieur, the public laughed . . . laughed!

Cyrano. Yes, to the end, I shall have been the one who prompted . . . and was forgotten! [*To ROXANE.*] Do you remember that evening on which Christian spoke to you from below the balcony? There was the epitome of my life: while I have stood below in darkness, others have climbed to gather the kiss and glory! It is well done, and on the brink of my grave I approve it: Molière has genius . . . Christian was a fine fellow! [*At this moment, the chapel bell having rung, the NUNS are seen passing at the back, along the avenue, on their way to service.*] Let them hasten to their prayers . . . the bell is summoning them . . .

Roxane [*rising and calling*]. Sister! Sister!

Cyrano [*holding her back*]. No! No! do not leave me to fetch anybody! When you came back I might not be here to rejoice . . . [*The NUNS have gone into the chapel; the organ is heard.*] I longed for a little music . . . it comes in time!

Roxane. I love you . . . you shall live!

Cyrano. No! for it is only in the fairy-tale that the shy and awkward prince when he hears the beloved say "I love you!" feels his ungainliness melt and drop

from him in the sunshine of those words! . . . But you would always know full well, dear heart, that there had taken place in your poor slave no beautifying change!

Roxane. I have hurt you . . . I have wrecked your life, I! . . . I!

Cyrano. You? . . . The reverse! Woman's sweetness I had never known. My mother . . . thought me unflattering. I had no sister. Later, I shunned Love's crossroad in fear of mocking eyes. To you I owe having had, at least, among the gentle and fair, a friend. Thanks to you there has passed across my life the rustle of a woman's gown.

Le Bret [*calling his attention to the moonlight peering through the branches*]. Your other friend, among the gentle and fair, is there . . . she comes to see you!

Cyrano [*smiling to the moon*]. I see her!

Roxane. I never loved but one . . . and twice I lose him!

Cyrano. Le Bret, I shall ascend into the opalescent moon, without need this time of a flying-machine!

Roxane. What are you saying?

Cyrano. Yes, it is there, you may be sure, I shall be sent for my Paradise. More than one soul of those I have loved must be apportioned there . . . There I shall find Socrates and Galileo!

Le Bret [*in revolt*]. No! No! It is too senseless, too cruel, too unfair! So true a poet! So great a heart! To die . . . like this! To die! . . .

Cyrano. As ever . . . Le Bret is grumbling!

Le Bret [*bursting into tears*]. My friend! My friend!

Cyrano [*lifting himself, his eyes wild*]. They are the Gascony Cadets! . . . Man in the gross . . . Eh, yes! . . . the weakness of the weakest point . . .

Le Bret. Learned . . . even in his delirium! . . .

Cyrano. Copernicus said . . .

Roxane. Oh!

Cyrano. But what the devil was he doing . . . and what the devil was he doing in that galley?

*Philosopher and physicist,
Musician, rhymester, duellist,
Explorer of the upper blue,*

Retorter apt with point and point,

Lover as well,—not for his peace!

Here lies Hercule Savinien

De Cyrano de Bergerac,

Who was everything . . . but of account! But, your pardons, I must go . . . I wish to keep no one waiting . . . See, a moon-beam, come to take me home! [*He has dropped in his chair; ROXANE'S weeping calls him back to reality; he looks at her and gently strokes her mourning veil.*] I do not wish . . . indeed, I do not wish . . . that you should sorrow less for Christian, the comely and the kind! Only I wish that when the everlasting cold shall have seized upon my fibres, this funereal veil should have a twofold meaning, and the mourning you wear for him be worn for me too . . . a little!

Roxane. I promise . . .

Cyrano [*seized with a great shivering, starts to his feet.*] Not there! No! Not in an elbow-chair! [*All draw nearer to help him.*] Let no one stay me! No one! [*He goes and stands against the tree.*] Nothing but this tree! [*Silence.*] She comes, Mors, the indiscriminate Madam! . . . Already I am booted with marble . . . gauntleted with lead! [*He stiffens himself.*] Ah, since she is on her way, I will await her standing . . . [*He draws his sword.*] Sword in hand!

Le Bret. Cyrano!

Roxane [*swooning*]. Cyrano!

[*All start back, terrified.*]

Cyrano. I believe she is looking at me . . . that she dares to look at my nose, the bony baggage who has none! [*He*

raises his sword.] What are you saying? That it is no use? . . . I know it! But one does not fight because there is hope of winning! No! . . . no! . . . it is much finer to fight when it is no use! . . . What are all those? You are a thousand strong? . . . Ah, I know you now . . . all my ancient enemies! . . . Hypocrisy? . . . [*He beats with his sword, in the vacancy.*] Take this! and this! Ha! Ha! Compromises? . . . and Prejudices? and dastardly Expedients? [*He strikes.*] That I should come to terms, I? . . . Never! Never! . . . Ah, you are there too, you, bloated and pompous Silliness! I know full well that you will lay me low at last . . . No matter: whilst I have breath, I will fight you, I will fight you, I will fight you! [*He waves his sword in great sweeping circles, and stops, panting.*] Yes, you have wrested from me everything, laurel as well as rose . . . Work your wills! . . . Spite of your worst, something will still be left me to take whither I go . . . and to-night when I enter God's house, in saluting, broadly will I sweep the azure threshold with what in spite of all I carry forth unblemished and unbent . . . [*He starts forward, with lifted sword.*] . . . and that is . . .

[*The sword falls from his hands, he staggers, drops in the arms of LE BRET and RAGUENEAU.*]

Roxane [*bending over him and kissing his forehead.*] That is? . . .

Cyrano [*opens his eyes again, recognizes her and says with a smile.*] . . . My plume!

THE END

THE LOWER DEPTHS

(NA DNYE)

BY MAXIM GORKY

Translated from the Russian by JENNY COVAN

The Lower Depths, A Drama in Four Acts by Maxim Gorky, translated by Jenny Covan. Copyright, 1922, by Morris Gest; reprinted by permission of Coward-McCann, Inc., from *The Moscow Art Theatre Series of Russian Plays*, Vol. 2.

MAXIM GORKY AND THE NATURALISTIC PLAY

ALEXEI MAXIMOVITCH PYESHKOV, who wrote under the pen name of Maxim Gorky ("The Bitter One") was born in 1868 at Nizhni Novgorod, Russia. Orphaned at an early age, he underwent the harsh treatment which forms the matter of so much of his work; he was subjected to a cruel foster father and sent out to earn his living at the age of ten; he drifted from one menial job to another and was generally depressed, rejected, and maltreated. The effect on him of these early experiences is easily anticipated. He discovered that "the whole structure of society was almost completely devoid of human sympathy." Comfort came to him almost entirely from books, such companions as he sought among political suspects and social outcasts only getting him in difficulties with the police. The latter indeed dogged him for the better part of his career, and until the founding of the Soviet state he was not infrequently in jail.

After a few ventures in writing short stories, often radical in content or theme, Gorky suddenly found himself a popular success. Anton Tchekhov, interesting himself in the young writer's career, urged him to turn his attention to the theatre. Tchekhov was at the time confined to the Crimea by his health, so Gorky visited the peninsula to learn from his master. By coincidence, the Moscow Art Players were also visiting the Crimea to give their great playwright a chance to see his works on the stage. The writing and production of *The Lower Depths* grew out of this fortunate conjunction, resulting in the greatest triumph in the Theatre's history and the founding of a literary career which was to lead Gorky to the highest position in the hierarchy of Soviet artists. For Gorky, when he died in 1936, had become the official spokesman for Joseph Stalin and, as the leader of modern Russian men of letters, had twice been honored by his country with national celebrations. He is in fact the one great literary figure that the U.S.S.R. has produced.

It should be pointed out, however, that Gorky was already a classic in Russia before the Revolution. *The Lower Depths* is no more a piece of Communist propaganda than is *The Cherry Orchard*. It is rather a transcription of the life which the author had led in the style perhaps most typical of the late nineteenth century—naturalism. Although naturalism has been briefly discussed in the General Introduction, a few additional details may assist in the evaluation of Gorky's achievement. *The Lower Depths* appears to be a completely shapeless play without climax or forward movement. The characters wander in and out, apparently unchanged by the situations in which they find themselves; every event is carefully blunted to remove its "theatrical" quality.

The creed of the naturalist was stated by Émile Zola when he declared that there should be no school, no formula, no standard of any sort; only life itself. The action should not consist of a story invented for the occasion, but in the inner struggle of the characters. In the naturalistic drama there is to be no "logic of events," but only the logic of sentiment and emotion. The artist is to join with the scientist in presenting the objective truth about life. There is no occasion to reply to Zola today—the objective and irresponsible pursuit of The Truth by experimental scientists has not always proved such a benefit to the progress of humanity as their discoveries in the nineteenth century promised. The artist, as distinguished from the experimental scientist, has always his responsibility to consider. Men look to him not merely for observation but for interpretation. His basic tool is neither his physical eye nor his microscope, but the inward eye which sees, as the great poet declared, into the heart of things.

This inward eye Gorky, as an exponent of naturalism, possessed. It is evident in his comment, quoted above, on the society about him. It was developed, perhaps, through his contacts with Tchekhov, who had, it is true, the doctor's perception but also the humanitarian's sympathy. And from the poor shreds of bourgeois dignity presented with understanding and without reproach in *The Sea Gull* and *The Three Sisters* it is a step downward only in terms of society to the human remnants of *The Lower Depths*.

Gorky's masterpiece is naturalistic in that its characters are fully formed by their environment and heredity. It is naturalistic in that the naturalist was prone to deal with the underworld in response to the social-democratic movement of the times. But it is a

work of art, with universal implications, in that every man may here see himself, confused, blinded, and trapped by the incomprehensible forces that surround him.

It is a work of art, too, in its form, disguised though the form may be. Using the Tchekhovian technique of almost mechanical contrast between one group of characters and another, one mood and another, Gorky has produced, not "the slice of life" desired by Zola, but an arrangement of life which has, for all its apparent haphazardness, an evident meaning. The characters do not aimlessly arrive in the lodging, they have been selected by the author. The appearance, too, of Luka on this particular evening creates a conflict the working out of which establishes the theme of the play. Gorky, finally, has invested his simple properties with symbolic meanings: the novel which the prostitute is so devotedly reading acquires an almost Ibsenic importance in the plot.

The Lower Depths was first produced at the Moscow Art Theatre in 1902. Its fame spread quickly. In 1903 it was played in Berlin, in London, and in New York. It has since become a classic in the repertory of college and little theatres throughout the world.

CHARACTERS

MIKHAIL IVANOFF KOSTILYOFF, *keeper of a night lodging*

VASSILISA KARPOVNA, *his wife*

NATASHA, *her sister*

MIEDVIEDIEFF, *her uncle, a policeman*

VASKA PEPEL, *a young thief*

ANDREI MITRICH KLESHTCH, *a locksmith*

ANNA, *his wife*

NASTYA, *a street-walker*

KVASHNYA, *a vendor of meat-pies*

BUBNOFF, *a cap-maker*

THE BARON

SATINE

THE ACTOR

LUKA, *a pilgrim*

ALYOSHKA, *a shoemaker*

KRIVoy ZOBy { *Porters*

THE TARTAR {

Night Lodgers, Tramps and Others

The action takes place in a night lodging and in "The Waste," an area in its rear

THE LOWER DEPTHS

ACT ONE

A cellar resembling a cave. The ceiling, which merges into stone walls, is low and grimy, and the plaster and paint are peeling off. There is a window, high up on the right wall, from which comes the light. The right corner, which constitutes PEPEL'S room, is partitioned off by thin boards. Close to the corner of this room is BUBNOFF'S wooden bunk. In the left corner stands a large Russian stove. In the stone wall, left, is a door leading to the kitchen where live KVASHNYA, the BARON, and NASTYA. Against the wall, between the stove and the door, is a large bed covered with dirty chintz. Bunks line the walls. In the foreground, by the left wall, is a block of wood with a vise and a small anvil fastened to it, and another smaller block of wood somewhat further towards the back. KLESHTCH is seated on the smaller block, trying keys into old locks. At his feet are two large bundles of various keys, wired together, also a battered tin samovar, a hammer, and pincers. In the center are a large table, two benches, and a stool, all of which are of dirty, unpainted wood. Behind the table KVASHNYA is busy-ing herself with the samovar. The BARON sits chewing a piece of black bread, and NASTYA occupies the stool, leans her elbows on the table, and reads a tattered book. In the bed, behind curtains, ANNA lies coughing. BUBNOFF is seated on his bunk, attempting to shape a pair of old trousers with the help of an ancient hat shape which he holds between his knees. Scattered about him are pieces of buckram, oilcloth, and rags. SATINE, just awakened, lies in his bunk, grunting. On top of the stove, the ACTOR, invisible to the audience, tosses about and coughs.

It is an early spring morning.

The Baron. And then?

Kvashnya. No, my dear, said I, keep away from me with such proposals. I've been through it all, you see—and not for a

hundred baked lobsters would I marry again!

Bubnoff [to SATINE]. What are you grunting about? [*SATINE keeps on grunting*]

Kvashnya. Why should I, said I, a free woman, my own mistress, enter my name into somebody else's passport and sell myself into slavery—no! Why—I wouldn't marry a man even if he were an American prince!

Kleshtch. You lie!

Kvashnya. Wha-at?

Kleshtch. You lie! You're going to marry Abramka. . . .

The Baron [snatching the book out of NASTYA'S hand and reading the title]. "Fatal Love" . . . [*Laughs*]

Nastya [stretching out her hand]. Give it back—give it back! Stop fooling!

[*The BARON looks at her and waves the book in the air*]

Kvashnya [to KLESHTCH]. You crimson goat, you—calling me a liar! How dare you be so rude to me?

The Baron [hitting NASTYA on the head with the book]. Nastya, you little fool!

Nastya [reaching for the book]. Give it back!

Kleshtch. Oh—what a great lady . . . but you'll marry Abramka just the same—that's all you're waiting for . . .

Kvashnya. Sure! Anything else? You nearly beat your wife to death!

Kleshtch. Shut up, you old bitch! It's none of your business!

Kvashnya. Ho-ho! can't stand the truth, can you?

The Baron. They're off again! Nastya, where are you?

Nastya [without lifting her head]. Hey—go away!

Anna [putting her head through the curtains]. The day has started. For God's sake, don't row!

Kleshtch. Whining again!

Anna. Every blessed day . . . let me die in peace, can't you?

Bubnoff. Noise won't keep you from dying.

Kvashnya [*walking up to ANNA*]. Little mother, how did you ever manage to live with this wretch?

Anna. Leave me alone—get away from me. . . .

Kvashnya. Well, well! You poor soul . . . how's the pain in the chest—any better?

The Baron. Kvashnya! Time to go to market. . . .

Kvashnya. We'll go presently. [*To ANNA*] Like some hot dumplings?

Anna. No, thanks. Why should I eat?

Kvashnya. You must eat. Hot food—good for you! I'll leave you some in a cup. Eat them when you feel like it. Come on, sir! [*To KLESHTCH*] You evil spirit!

[*Goes into kitchen*]

Anna [*coughing*]. Lord, Lord . . .

The Baron [*painfully pushing forward NASTYA's head*]. Throw it away—little fool!

Nastya [*muttering*]. Leave me alone—I don't bother you . . .

[*The BARON follows KVASHNYA, whispering*]

Satine [*sitting up in his bunk*]. Who beat me up yesterday?

Bubnoff. Does it make any difference who?

Satine. Suppose they did—but why did they?

Bubnoff. Were you playing cards?

Satine. Yes!

Bubnoff. That's why they beat you.

Satine. Scoundrels!

The Actor [*raising his head from the top of the stove*]. One of these days they'll beat you to death!

Satine. You're a jackass!

The Actor. Why?

Satine. Because a man can die only once!

The Actor [*after a silence*]. I don't understand—

Kleshtch. Say! You crawl from that stove—and start cleaning house! Don't play the delicate primrose!

The Actor. None of your business!

Kleshtch. Wait till Vassilisa comes—she'll show you whose business it is!

The Actor. To hell with Vassilisa! To-day is the Baron's turn to clean. . . . Baron!

[*The BARON comes from the kitchen*]

The Baron. I've no time to clean . . . I'm going to market with Kvashnya.

The Actor. That doesn't concern me. Go to the gallows if you like. It's your turn to sweep the floor just the same—I'm not going to do other people's work . . .

The Baron. Go to blazes! Nastya will do it. Hey there—fatal love! Wake up!

[*Takes the book away from NASTYA*]

Nastya [*getting up*]. What do you want? Give it back to me! You scoundrel! And that's a nobleman for you!

The Baron [*returning the book to her*]. Nastya! Sweep the floor for me—will you?

Nastya [*goes to kitchen*]. Not so's you'll notice it!

Kvashnya [*to the BARON through kitchen door*]. Come on—you! They don't need you! Actor! You were asked to do it, and now you go ahead and attend to it—it won't kill you . . .

The Actor. It's always I . . . I don't understand why. . . .

[*The BARON comes from the kitchen, across his shoulders a wooden beam from which hang earthen pots covered with rags*]

The Baron. Heavier than ever!

Satine. It paid you to be born a Baron, eh?

Kvashnya [*to ACTOR*]. See to it that you sweep up! [*Crosses to outer door, letting the BARON pass ahead*]

THE ACTOR [*climbing down from the stove*]. It's bad for me to inhale dust. [*With pride*] My organism is poisoned with alcohol. [*Sits down on a bunk, meditating*]

Satine. Organism—organon. . . .

Anna. Andrei Mitritch. . . .

Kleshtch. What now?

Anna. Kvashnya left me some dumpings over there—you eat them!

Kleshtch [*coming over to her*]. And you—don't you want any?

Anna. No. Why should I eat? You're a workman—you need it.

Kleshtch. Frightened, are you? Don't be! You'll get all right!

Anna. Go and eat! It's hard on me. . . . I suppose very soon . . .

Kleshtch [*walking away*]. Never mind—maybe you'll get well—you can never tell!

[*Goes into kitchen*]

The Actor [*loud, as if he had suddenly awakened*]. Yesterday the doctor in the hospital said to me: "Your organism," he

said, "is entirely poisoned with alcohol . . ."

Satine [smiling]. Organon . . .

The Actor [stubbornly]. Not organon—organism!

Satine. Sibylline. . . .

The Actor [shaking his fist at him]. Nonsense! I'm telling you seriously . . . if the organism is poisoned . . . that means it's bad for me to sweep the floor—to inhale the dust . . .

Satine. Macrobiotic . . . hah!

Bubnoff. What are you muttering?

Satine. Words—and here's another one for you—transcendentalistic . . .

Bubnoff. What does it mean?

Satine. Don't know—I forgot . . .

Bubnoff. Then why did you say it?

Satine. Just so! I'm bored, brother, with human words—all our words. Bored! I've heard each one of them a thousand times surely.

The Actor. In *Hamlet* they say: "Words, words, words!" It's a good play. I played the grave-digger in it once. . . .

[KLESHTCH comes from the kitchen]

Kleshtch. Will you start playing with the broom?

The Actor. None of your business. [Striking his chest] Ophelia! O—remember me in thy prayers!

[Back stage is heard a dull murmur, cries, and a police whistle. KLESHTCH sits down to work, filing screechily]

Satine. I love unintelligible, obsolete words. When I was a youngster—and worked as a telegraph operator—I read heaps of books. . . .

Bubnoff. Were you really a telegrapher?

Satine. I was. There are some excellent books—and lots of curious words . . . Once I was an educated man, do you know?

Bubnoff. I've heard it a hundred times. Well, so you were! That isn't very important! Me—well—once I was a furrier. I had my own shop—what with dyeing the fur all day long, my arms were yellow up to the elbows, brother. I thought I'd never be able ever to get clean again—that I'd go to my grave, all yellow! But look at my hands now—they're plain dirty—that's what!

Satine. Well, and what then?

Bubnoff. That's all!

Satine. What are you trying to prove?

Bubnoff. Oh, well—just matching

thoughts—no matter how much dye you get on yourself, it all comes off in the end—yes, yes—

Satine. Oh—my bones ache!

The Actor [sits, nursing his knees]. Education is all rot. Talent is the thing. I knew an actor—who read his parts by heart, syllable by syllable—but he played heroes in a way that . . . why—the whole theater would rock with ecstasy!

Satine. Bubnoff, give me five kopecks.

Bubnoff. I only have two—

The Actor. I say—talent, that's what you need to play heroes. And talent is nothing but faith in yourself, in your own powers—

Satine. Give me five kopecks and I'll have faith that you're a hero, a crocodile, or a police inspector—Kleshtch, give me five kopecks.

Kleshtch. Go to hell! All of you!

Satine. What are you cursing for? I know you haven't a kopeck in the world!

Anna. Andrei Mitritch—I'm suffocating—I can't breathe—

Kleshtch. What shall I do?

Bubnoff. Open the door into the hall.

Kleshtch. All right. You're sitting on the bunk, I on the floor. You change places with me, and I'll let you open the door. I have a cold as it is.

Bubnoff [unconcernedly]. I don't care if you open the door—it's your wife who's asking—

Kleshtch [morosely]. I don't care who's asking—

Satine. My head buzzes—ah—why do people have to hit each other over the heads?

Bubnoff. They don't only hit you over the head, but over the rest of the body as well. [Rises] I must go and buy some thread—our bosses are late today—seems as if they've croaked. [Exit]

[ANNA coughs; SATINE is lying down motionless, his hands folded behind his head]

The Actor [looks about him morosely, then goes to ANNA]. Feeling bad, eh?

Anna. I'm choking—

The Actor. If you wish, I'll take you into the hallway. Get up, then, come! [He helps her to rise, wraps some sort of a rag about her shoulders, and supports her toward the hall] It isn't easy. I'm sick myself—poisoned with alcohol . . .

[KOSTLYOFF appears in the doorway]

Kostilyoff. Going for a stroll? What a nice couple—the gallant cavalier and the lady fair!

The Actor. Step aside, you—don't you see that we're invalids?

Kostilyoff. Pass on, please! [*Hums a religious tune, glances about him suspiciously, and bends his head to the left as if listening to what is happening in PEPEL'S room. KLESHTCH is jangling his keys and scraping away with his file, and looks askance at the other*] Filing?

Kleshtch. What?

Kostilyoff. I say, are you filing? [*Pause*] What did I want to ask? [*Quick and low*] Hasn't my wife been here?

Kleshtch. I didn't see her.

Kostilyoff [*carefully moving toward PEPEL'S room*]. You take up a whole lot of room for your two rubles a month. The bed—and your bench—yes—you take up five rubles' worth of space, so help me God! I'll have to put another half ruble to your rent—

Kleshtch. You'll put a noose around my neck and choke me . . . you'll croak soon enough, and still all you think of is half rubles—

Kostilyoff. Why should I choke you? What would be the use? God be with you—live and prosper! But I'll have to raise you half a ruble—I'll buy oil for the ikon lamp, and my offering will atone for my sins, and for yours as well. You don't think much of your sins—not much! Oh, Andrushka, you're a wicked man! Your wife is dying because of your wickedness—no one loves you, no one respects you—your work is squeaky, jarring on every one.

Kleshtch [*shouts*]. What do you come here for—just to annoy me?

[*SATINE grunts loudly*]

Kostilyoff [*with a start*]. God, what a noise!

[*The Actor enters*]

The Actor. I've put her down in the hall and wrapped her up.

Kostilyoff. You're a kindly fellow. That's good. Some day you'll be rewarded for it.

The Actor. When?

Kostilyoff. In the Beyond, little brother—there all our deeds will be reckoned up.

The Actor. Suppose you reward me right now?

Kostilyoff. How can I do that?

The Actor. Wipe out half my debt.

Kostilyoff. He-ho! You're always jesting, darling—always poking fun . . . can kindness of heart be repaid with gold? Kindliness—it's above all other qualities. But your debt to me—remains a debt. And so you'll have to pay me back. You ought to be kind to me, an old man, without seeking for reward!

The Actor. You're a swindler, old man!

[*Goes into kitchen*]

[*KLESHTCH rises and goes into the hall*]

Kostilyoff [*to SATINE*]. See that squeaker—? He ran away—he doesn't like me!

Satine. Does anybody like you besides the Devil.

Kostilyoff [*laughing*]. Oh—you're so quarrelsome! But I like you all—I understand you all, my unfortunate downtrodden, useless brethren . . . [*Suddenly, rapidly*] Is Vaska home?

Satine. See for yourself—

Kostilyoff [*goes to the door and knocks*]. Vaska!

[*The Actor appears at the kitchen door, chewing something*]

Pepel. Who is it?

Kostilyoff. It's I—I, Vaska!

Pepel. What do you want?

Kostilyoff [*stepping aside*]. Open!

Satine [*without looking at KOSTILYOFF*]. He'll open—and she's there—

[*The Actor makes a grimace*]

Kostilyoff [*in a low, anxious tone*]. Eh? Who's there? What?

Satine. Speaking to me?

Kostilyoff. What did you say?

Satine. Oh—nothing—I was just talking to myself—

Kostilyoff. Take care, brother. Don't carry your joking too far! [*Knocks loudly at door*] Vassily!

Pepel [*opening door*]. Well? What are you disturbing me for?

Kostilyoff [*peering into room*]. I—you see—

Pepel. Did you bring the money?

Kostilyoff. I've something to tell you—

Pepel. Did you bring the money?

Kostilyoff. What money? Wait—

Pepel. Why—the seven rubles for the watch—well?

Kostilyoff. What watch, Vaska? Oh, you—

Pepel. Look here. Yesterday, before witnesses, I sold you a watch for ten rubles,

you gave me three—now let me have the other seven. What are you blinking for? You hang around here—you disturb people—and don't seem to know yourself what you're after.

Kostilyoff. Sh-sh! Don't be angry, Vaska. The watch—it is—

Satine. Stolen!

Kostilyoff [sternly]. I do not accept stolen goods—how can you imagine—

Pepel [taking him by the shoulder]. What did you disturb me for? What do you want?

Kostilyoff. I don't want—anything. I'll go—if you're in such a state—

Pepel. Be off, and bring the money!

Kostilyoff. What ruffians! I—I—

[Exit]

The Actor. What a farce!

Satine. That's fine—I like it.

Pepel. What did he come here for?

Satine [laughing]. Don't you understand? He's looking for his wife. Why don't you beat him up once and for all, Vaska?

Pepel. Why should I let such trash interfere with my life?

Satine. Show some brains! And then you can marry Vassilisa—and become our boss—

Pepel. Heavenly bliss! And you'd smash up my household and, because I'm a soft-hearted fool, you'll drink up everything I possess. [Sits on a bunk] Old devil—woke me up—I was having such a pleasant dream. I dreamed I was fishing—and I caught an enormous trout—such a trout as you only see in dreams! I was playing him—and I was so afraid the line would snap. I had just got out the gaff—and I thought to myself—in a moment—

Satine. It wasn't a trout, it was Vassilisa—

The Actor. He caught Vassilisa a long time ago.

Pepel [angrily]. You can all go to the devil—and Vassilisa with you—

[KLESHTCH comes from the hall]

Kleshtch. Devilishly cold!

The Actor. Why didn't you bring Anna back? She'll freeze, out there—

Kleshtch. Natasha took her into the kitchen—

The Actor. The old man will kick her out—

Kleshtch [sitting down to his work]. Well—Natasha will bring her in here—

Satine. Vassily—give me five kopecks!

The Actor [to SATINE]. Oh, you—always five kopecks—Vassya—give us twenty kopecks—

Pepel. I'd better give it to them now before they ask for a ruble. Here you are!

Satine. Gibraltar! There are no kindlier people in the world than thieves!

Kleshtch [morosely]. They earn their money easily—they don't work—

Satine. Many earn it easily, but not many part with it so easily. Work? Make work pleasant—and maybe I'll work too. Yes—maybe. When work's a pleasure, life's, too. When it's toil, then life is a drudge. [To the Actor] You, Sardanapalus! Come on!

The Actor. Let's go, Nebuchadnezzar! I'll get as drunk as forty thousand toppers!

[They leave]

Pepel [yawning]. Well, how's your wife?

Kleshtch. It seems as if soon—[Pause]

Pepel. Now I look at you—seems to me all that filing and scraping of yours is useless.

Kleshtch. Well—what else can I do?

Pepel. Nothing.

Kleshtch. How can I live?

Pepel. People manage, somehow.

Kleshtch. Them? Call them people? Muck and dregs—that's what they are! I'm a workman—I'm ashamed even to look at them. I've slaved since I was a child. . . . D'you think I shan't be able to tear myself away from here? I'll crawl out of here, even if I have to leave my skin behind—but crawl out I will! Just wait . . . my wife'll die . . . I've lived here six months, and it seems like six years.

Pepel. Nobody here's any worse off than you . . . say what you like . . .

Kleshtch. No worse is right. They've neither honor nor conscience.

Pepel [indifferently]. What good does it do—honor or conscience? Can you get them on their feet instead of on their uppers—through honor and conscience? Honor and conscience are needed only by those who have power and energy . . .

Bubnoff [coming back]. Oh—I'm frozen.

Pepel. Bubnoff! Got a conscience?

Bubnoff. What? A conscience?

Pepel. Exactly!

Bubnoff. What do I need a conscience for? I'm not rich.

Pepel. Just what I said: honor and conscience are for the rich—right! And Kleshtch is upbraiding us because we haven't any!

Bubnoff. Why—did he want to borrow some of it?

Pepel. No—he has plenty of his own...

Bubnoff. Oh—are you selling it? You won't sell much around here. But if you had some old boxes, I'd buy them—on credit...

Pepel [didactically]. You're a jackass, Andrushka! On the subject of conscience you ought to hear Satine—or the Baron...

Kleshtch. I've nothing to talk to them about!

Pepel. They have more brains than you—even if they're drunkards...

Bubnoff. He who can be drunk and wise at the same time is doubly blessed...

Pepel. Satine says every man expects his neighbor to have a conscience, but—you see—it isn't to any one's advantage to have one—that's a fact.

[*NATASHA enters, followed by LUKA who carries a stick in his hand, a bundle on his back, a kettle and a teapot slung from his belt*]

Luka. How are you, honest folks?

Pepel [twisting his mustache]. Aha—Natasha!

Bubnoff [to LUKA]. I was honest—up to spring before last.

Natasha. Here's a new lodger...

Luka. Oh, it's all the same to me. Crooks—I don't mind them, either. For my part there's no bad flea—they're all black—and they all jump—... Well, dearie, show me where I can stow myself.

Natasha [pointing to kitchen door]. Go in there, grand-dad.

Luka. Thanks, girlie! One place is like another—as long as an old fellow keeps warm, he keeps happy...

Pepel. What an amusing old codger you brought in, Natasha!

Natasha. A hanged sight more interesting than you! ... Andrei, your wife's in the kitchen with us—come and fetch her after a while...

Kleshtch. All right—I will...

Natasha. And be a little more kind to her—you know she won't last much longer.

Kleshtch. I know...

Natasha. Knowing won't do any good—it's terrible—dying—don't you understand?

Pepel. Well—look at me—I'm not afraid...

Natasha. Oh—you're a wonder, aren't you?

Bubnoff [whistling]. Oh—this thread's rotten...

Pepel. Honestly, I'm not afraid! I'm ready to die right now. Knife me to the heart—and I'll die without making a sound... even gladly—from such a pure hand...

Natasha [going out]. Spin that yarn for some one else!

Bubnoff. Oh—that thread is rotten—rotten—

Natasha [at hallway door]. Don't forget your wife, Andrei!

Kleshtch. All right.

Pepel. She's a wonderful girl!

Bubnoff. She's all right.

Pepel. What makes her so curt with me? Anyway—she'll come to no good here...

Bubnoff. Through you—sure!

Pepel. Why through me? I feel sorry for her...

Bubnoff. As the wolf for the lamb!

Pepel. You lie! I feel very sorry for her... very... very sorry! She has a tough life here—I can see that...

Kleshtch. Just wait till Vassilisa catches you talking to her!

Bubnoff. Vassilisa? She won't give up so easily what belongs to her—she's a cruel woman!

Pepel [stretching himself on the bunk]. You two prophets can go to hell!

Kleshtch. Just wait—you'll see!

Luka [singing in the kitchen]. "In the dark of the night the way is black..."

Kleshtch. Another one who yelps!

Pepel. It's dreary! Why do I feel so dreary? You live—and everything seems all right. But suddenly a cold chill goes through you—and then everything gets dreary...

Bubnoff. Dreary? Hm-hm—

Pepel. Yes—yes—

Luka [sings]. "The way is black..."

Pepel. Old fellow! Hey there!

Luka [looking from kitchen door]. You call me?

Pepel. Yes. Don't sing!

Luka [coming in]. You don't like it?

Pepel. When people sing well I like it—

Luka. In other words—I don't sing well?

Pepel. Evidently!

Luka. Well, well—and I thought I sang well. That's always the way: a man imagines there's one thing he can do well, and suddenly he finds out that other people don't think so . . .

Pepel [laughs]. That's right . . .

Bubnoff. First you say you feel dreary—and then you laugh!

Pepel. None of your business, raven!

Luka. Who do they say feels dreary?

Pepel. I do.

[*THE BARON enters*]

Luka. Well, well—out there in the kitchen there's a girl reading and crying! That's so! Her eyes are wet with tears . . . I say to her: "What's the matter, darling?" And she says: "It's so sad!" "What's so sad?" say I. "The book!" says she.—And that's how people spend their time. Just because they're bored . . .

The Baron. She's a fool!

Pepel. Have you had tea, Baron?

The Baron. Yes. Go on!

Pepel. Well—want me to open a bottle?

The Baron. Of course. Go on!

Pepel. Drop on all fours, and bark like a dog!

The Baron. Fool! What's the matter with you? Are you drunk?

Pepel. Go on—bark a little! It'll amuse me. You're an aristocrat. You didn't even consider us human formerly, did you?

The Baron. Go on!

Pepel. Well—and now I am making you bark like a dog—and you will bark, won't you?

The Baron. All right. I will. You jack-ass! What pleasure can you derive from it, since I myself know that I have sunk almost lower than you. You should have made me drop on all fours in the days when I was still above you.

Bubnoff. That's right . . .

Luka. I say so, too!

Bubnoff. What's over, is over. Remain only trivialities. We know no class distinctions here. We've shed all pride and self-respect. Blood and bone—man—just plain man—that's what we are!

Luka. In other words, we're all equal . . . and you, friend, were you really a Baron?

The Baron. Who are you? A ghost?

Luka [laughing]. I've seen counts and princes in my day—this is the first time I meet a baron—and one who's decaying—at that!

Pepel [laughing]. Baron, I blush for you!

The Baron. It's time you knew better, Vassily . . .

Luka. Hey-hey—I look at you, brothers—the life you're leading . . .

Bubnoff. Such a life! As soon as the sun rises, our voices rise, too—in quarrels!

The Baron. We've all seen better days—yes! I used to wake up in the morning and drink my coffee in bed—coffee—with cream! Yes—

Luka. And yet we're all human beings. Pretend all you want to, put on all the airs you wish, but man you were born, and man you must die. And as I watch I see that the wiser people get, the busier they get—and though from bad to worse, they still strive to improve—stubbornly—

The Baron. Who are you, old fellow? Where do you come from?

Luka. I?

The Baron. Are you a tramp?

Luka. We're all of us tramps—why—I've heard said that the very earth we walk on is nothing but a tramp in the universe.

The Baron [severely]. Perhaps. But have you a passport?

Luka [after a short pause]. And what are you—a police inspector?

Pepel [delighted]. You scored, old fellow! Well, Barosha, you got it this time!

Bubnoff. Yes—our little aristocrat got his!

The Baron [embarrassed]. What's the matter? I was only joking, old man. Why, brother, I haven't a passport, either.

Bubnoff. You lie!

The Baron. Oh—well—I have some sort of papers—but they have no value—

Luka. They're papers just the same—and no papers are any good—

Pepel. Baron—come on to the saloon with me—

The Baron. I'm ready. Good-bye, old man—you old scamp—

Luka. Maybe I am one, brother—

Pepel [near doorway]. Come on—come on!

[*Leaves, BARON following him quickly*]

Luka. Was he really once a Baron?

Bubnoff. Who knows? A gentleman—?

Yes. That much he's even now. Occasionally it sticks out. He never got rid of the habit.

Luka. Nobility is like small-pox. A man may get over it—but it leaves marks . . .

Bubnoff. He's all right all the same—occasionally he kicks—as he did about your passport . . .

[*ALYOSHKHA comes in, slightly drunk, with a concertina in his hand, whistling*]

Alyoshka. Hey there, lodgers!

Bubnoff. What are you yelling for?

Alyoshka. Excuse me—I beg your pardon! I'm a well-bred man—

Bubnoff. On a spree again?

Alyoshka. Right you are! A moment ago Medyakín, the precinct captain, threw me out of the police station and said: "Look here—I don't want as much as a smell of you to stay in the streets—d'you hear?" I'm a man of principles, and the boss croaks at me—and what's a boss anyway—pah!—it's all bosh—the boss is a drunkard. I don't make any demands on life. I want nothing—that's all. Offer me one ruble, offer me twenty—it doesn't affect me. [*NASTYA comes from the kitchen*] Offer me a million—I won't take it! And to think that I, a respectable man, should be ordered about by a pal of mine—and he a drunkard! I won't have it—I won't!

[*NASTYA stands in the doorway, shaking her head at ALYOSHKHA*]

Luka [*good-naturedly*]. Well, boy, you're a bit confused—

Bubnoff. Aren't men fools!

Alyoshka [*stretches out on the floor*]. Here, eat me up alive—and I don't want anything. I'm a desperate man. Show me one better! Why am I worse than others? There! Medyakín said: "If you show yourself on the streets I smash your face!" And yet I shall go out—I'll go—and stretch out in the middle of the street—let them choke me—I don't want a thing!

Nastya. Poor fellow—only a boy—and he's already putting on such airs—

Alyoshka [*kneeling before her*]. Lady! Mademoiselle! Parlez français—? Prix courant? I'm on a spree—

Nastya [*in a loud whisper*]. Vassilisa!

Vassilisa [*opens door quickly; to ALYOSHKHA*]. You here again?

Alyoshka. How do you do—? Come in—you're welcome—

Vassilisa. I told you, young puppy, that not a shadow of you should stick around here—and you're back—eh?

Alyoshka. Vassilisa Karpovna . . . shall I tune up a funeral march for you?

Vassilisa [*seizing him by the shoulders*]. Get out!

Alyoshka [*moving towards the door*]. Wait—you can't put me out this way! I learned this funeral march a little while ago! It's refreshing music . . . wait—you can't put me out like that!

Vassilisa. I'll show whether I can or not. I'll rouse the whole street against you—you foul-mouthed creature—you're too young to bark about me—

Alyoshka [*running out*]. All right—I'll go—

Vassilisa. Look out—I'll get you yet!

Alyoshka [*opens the door and shouts*]. Vassilisa Karpovna—I'm not afraid of you—

[*Hides*]

[*LUKA laughs*]

Vassilisa. Who are you?

Luka. A passer-by—a traveler . . .

Vassilisa. Stopping for the night or going to stay here?

Luka. I'll see.

Vassilisa. Have you a passport?

Luka. Yes.

Vassilisa. Give it to me.

Luka. I'll bring it over to your house—

Vassilisa. Call yourself a traveler? If you'd say a tramp—that would be nearer the truth—

Luka [*sighing*]. You're not very kindly, mother!

[*VASSILISA goes to door that leads to PEPEL's room. ALYOSHKHA pokes his head through the kitchen door*]

Alyoshka. Has she left?

Vassilisa [*turning around*]. Are you still here?

[*ALYOSHKHA disappears, whistling. NASTYA and LUKE laugh*]

Bubnoff [*to VASSILISA*]. He isn't here—*Vassilisa.* Who?

Bubnoff. Vaska.

Vassilisa. Did I ask you about him?

Bubnoff. I noticed you were looking around—

Vassilisa. I am looking to see if things are in order, you see? Why aren't the floors swept yet? How often did I give orders to keep the house clean?

Bubnoff. It's the actor's turn to sweep—

Vassilisa. Never mind whose turn it is! If the health inspector comes and fines me, I'll throw out the lot of you—

Bubnoff [*calmly*]. Then how are you going to earn your living?

Vassilisa. I don't want a speck of dirt! [*Goes to kitchen; to NASTYA*] What are you hanging round here for? Why's your face all swollen up? Why are you standing there like a dummy? Go on—sweep the floor! Did you see Natalia? Was she here?

Nastya. I don't know—I haven't seen her . . .

Vassilisa. Bubnoff! Was my sister here?

Bubnoff. She brought him along.

Vassilisa. That one—was he home?

Bubnoff. Vassily? Yes—Natalia was here talking to Kleshtch—

Vassilisa. I'm not asking you whom she talked to. Dirt everywhere—filth—oh, you swine! Mop it all up—do you hear?

[*Exit rapidly*]

Bubnoff. What a savage beast she is!

Luka. She's a lady that means business!

Nastya. You grow to be an animal, leading such a life—any human being tied to such a husband as hers . . .

Bubnoff. Well—that tie isn't worrying her any—

Luka. Does she always have these fits?

Bubnoff. Always. You see, she came to find her lover—but he isn't home—

Luka. I guess she was hurt. Oh-ho! Everybody is trying to be boss—and is threatening everybody else with all kinds of punishment—and still there's no order in life . . . and no cleanliness—

Bubnoff. All the world likes order—but some people's brains aren't fit for it. All the same—the room should be swept—Nastya—you ought to get busy!

Nastya. Oh, certainly? Anything else? Think I'm your servant? [*Silence*] I'm going to get drunk to-night—dead-drunk!

Bubnoff. Fine business!

Luka. Why do you want to get drunk, girlie? A while ago you were crying—and now you say you'll get drunk—

Nastya [*defiantly*]. I'll drink—then I cry again—that's all there's to it!

Bubnoff. That's nothing!

Luka. But for what reason—tell me! Every pimple has a cause! [*NASTYA remains silent, shaking her head*] Oh—you men—what's to become of you? All right—

I'll sweep the place. Where's your broom?

Bubnoff. Behind the door—in the hall—
[*LUKA goes into the hall*] Nastinka!

Nastya. Yes?

Bubnoff. Why did Vassilisa jump on Alyoshka?

Nastya. He told her that Vaska was tired of her and was going to get rid of her—and that he's going to make up to Natasha—I'll go away from here—I'll find another lodging-house—

Bubnoff. Why? Where?

Nastya. I'm sick of this—I'm not wanted here!

Bubnoff [*calmly*]. You're not wanted anywhere—and, anyway, all people on earth are superfluous—

[*NASTYA shakes her head. Rises and slowly, quietly, leaves the cellar.*

MIEDVIEDIEFF comes in. LUKA, with the broom, follows him]

Miedviedieff. I don't think I know you—

Luka. How about the others—d'you know them all?

Miedviedieff. I must know everybody in my precinct. But I don't know you.

Luka. That's because, uncle, the whole world can't stow itself away in your precinct—some of it was bound to remain outside . . .

[*Goes into kitchen*]

Miedviedieff [*crosses to BUBNOFF*]. It's true—my precinct is rather small—yet it's worse than any of the very largest. Just now, before getting off duty, I had to bring Alyoshka, the shoemaker, to the station house. Just imagine—there he was, stretched right in the middle of the street, playing his concertina and yelping: "I want nothing, nothing!" Horses going past all the time—and with all the traffic going on, he could easily have been run over—and so on! He's a wild youngster—so I just collared him—he likes to make mischief—

Bubnoff. Coming to play checkers to-night?

Miedviedieff. Yes—I'll come—how's Vaska?

Bubnoff. Same as ever—

Miedviedieff. Meaning—he's getting along—?

Bubnoff. Why shouldn't he? He's able to get along all right.

Miedviedieff [*doubtfully*]. Why shouldn't he? [*LUKA goes into hallway, carrying a*

pail] M—yes—there's a lot of talk about Vaska. Haven't you heard?

Bubnoff. I hear all sorts of gossip . . .

Miedviedieff. There seems to have been some sort of talk concerning Vassilisa. Haven't you heard about it?

Bubnoff. What?

Miedviedieff. Oh—why—generally speaking. Perhaps you know—and lie. Everybody knows—[*Severely*] You mustn't lie, brother!

Bubnoff. Why should I lie?

Miedviedieff. That's right. Dogs! They say that Vaska and Vassilisa . . . but what's that to me? I'm not her father. I'm her uncle. Why should they ridicule me? [*KVASHNYA comes in*] What are people coming to? They laugh at everything. Aha—you here?

Kvashnya. Well—my love-sick garrison—? Bubnoff! He came up to me again on the marketplace and started pestering me about marrying him . . .

Bubnoff. Go to it! Why not? He has money and he's still a husky fellow.

Miedviedieff. Me—? I should say so!

Kvashnya. You ruffian! Don't you dare touch my sore spot! I've gone through it once already, darling. Marriage to a woman is just like jumping through a hole in the ice in winter. You do it once, and you remember it the rest of your life . . .

Miedviedieff. Wait! There are different breeds of husbands . . .

Kvashnya. But there's only one of me! When my beloved husband kicked the bucket, I spent the whole day all by my lonely—just bursting with joy. I sat and simply couldn't believe it was true. . . .

Miedviedieff. If your husband beat you without cause, you should have complained to the police.

Kvashnya. I complained to God for eight years—and he didn't help.

Miedviedieff. Nowadays the law forbids to beat your wife . . . all is very strict these days—there's law and order everywhere. You can't beat up people without due cause. If you beat them to maintain discipline—all right . . .

Luka [*comes in with ANNA*]. Well—we finally managed to get here after all. Oh, you! Why do you, weak as you are, walk about alone? Where's your bunk?

Anna [*pointing*]. Thank you, grand-dad.

Kvashnya. There—she's married—look at her!

Luka. The little woman is in very bad shape . . . she was creeping along the hallway, clinging to the wall and moaning—why do you leave her by herself?

Kvashnya. Oh, pure carelessness on our part, little father—forgive us! Her maid, it appears, went out for a walk . . .

Luka. Go on—poke fun at me . . . but, all the same, how can you neglect a human being like that? No matter who or what, every human life has its worth . . .

Miedviedieff. There should be supervision! Suppose she died suddenly—? That would cause a lot of bother . . . we must look after her!

Luka. True, sergeant!

Miedviedieff. Well—yes—though I'm not a sergeant—ah—yet!

Luka. No! But you carry yourself most martially!

[*Noise of shuffling feet is heard in the hallway. Muffled cries*]

Miedviedieff. What now—a row?

Bubnoff. Sounds like it?

Kvashnya. I'll go and see . . .

Miedviedieff. I'll go, too. It is my duty! Why separate people when they fight? They'll stop sooner or later of their own accord. One gets tired of fighting. Why not let them fight all they want to—freely? They wouldn't fight half as often—if they'd remember former beatings . . .

Bubnoff [*climbing down from his bunk*]. Why don't you speak to your superiors about it?

Kostilyoff [*throws open the door and shouts*]. Abram! Come quick—Vassilisa is killing Natasha—come quick.

[*KVASHNYA, MIEDVIEDIEFF, and BUBNOFF rush into hallway; LUKA looks after them, shaking his head*]

Anna. Oh God—poor little Natasha . . .

Luka. Who's fighting out there?

Anna. Our landladies—they're sisters . . .

Luka [*crossing to ANNA*]. Why?

Anna. Oh—for no reason—except that they're both fat and healthy . . .

Luka. What's your name?

Anna. Anna . . . I look at you . . . you're like my father—my dear father . . . you're as gentle as he was—and as soft. . . .

Luka. Soft! Yes! They pounded me till I got soft! [*Laughs tremulously*]

ACT TWO

Same as Act One—Night.

On the bunks near the stove SATINE, the BARON, KRIVOY ZOB, and the TARTAR play cards. KLESHTCH and the ACTOR watch them. BUBNOFF, on his bunk, is playing checkers with MIEDVIEDIEFF. LUKA sits on a stool by ANNA's bedside. The place is lit by two lamps, one on the wall near the card players, the other is on BUBNOFF's bunk.

The Tartar. I'll play one more game—then I'll stop . . .

Bubnoff. Zob! Sing! [*He sings*]

"The sun rises and sets . . ."

Zob [*joining in*].

"But my prison is dark, dark . . ."

The Tartar [*to SATINE*]. Shuffle the cards—and shuffle them well. We know your kind—

Zob and Bubnoff [*together*].

"Day and night the wardens

Watch beneath my window . . ."

Anna. Blows—insults—I've had nothing but that all my life long . . .

Luka. Don't worry, little mother!

Miedviedieff. Look where you're moving!

Bubnoff. Oh, yes—that's right . . .

The Tartar [*threatening SATINE with his fist*]. You're trying to palm a card? I've seen you—you scoundrel . . .

Zob. Stop it, Hassan! They'll skin us anyway . . . come on, Bubnoff!

Anna. I can't remember a single day when I didn't go hungry . . . I've been afraid, waking, eating, and sleeping . . . all my life I've trembled—afraid I wouldn't get another bite . . . all my life I've been in rags—all through my wretched life—and why . . . ?

Luka. Yes, yes, child—you're tired—never you mind!

The Actor [*to Zob*]. Play the Jack—the Jack, devil take you!

The Baron. And we play the King!

Kleshtch. They always win.

Satine. Such is our habit.

Miedviedieff. I have the Queen!

Bubnoff. And so have I!

Anna. I'm dying . . .

Kleshtch. Look, look! Prince, throw up the game—throw it up, I tell you!

The Actor. Can't he play without your assistance?

The Baron. Look out, Andrushka, or I'll beat the life out of you!

The Tartar. Deal once more—the pitcher went after water—and got broke—and so did I!

[*KLESHTCH shakes his head and crosses to BUBNOFF*]

Anna. I keep on thinking—is it possible that I'll suffer in the other world as I did in this—is it possible? There, too?

Luka. Nothing of the sort! Don't you disturb yourself! You'll rest there . . . be patient. We all suffer, dear, each in our own way. . . . [*Rises and goes quickly into kitchen*]

Bubnoff [*sings*].

"Watch as long as you please . . ."

Zob. "I shan't run away . . ."

Both [*together*].

"I long to be free, free—

Alas! I cannot break my chains. . . ."

The Tartar [*yells*]. That card was up his sleeve!

The Baron [*embarrassed*]. Do you want me to shove it up your nose?

The Actor [*emphatically*]. Prince! You're mistaken—nobody—ever . . .

The Tartar. I saw it! You cheat! I won't play!

Satine [*gathering up the cards*]. Leave us alone, Hassan . . . you knew right along that we're cheats—why did you play with us?

The Baron. He lost forty kopecks and he yelps as if he had lost a fortune! And a Prince at that!

The Tartar [*excitedly*]. Then play honest!

Satine. What for?

The Tartar. What do you mean "what for"?

Satine. Exactly. What for?

The Tartar. Don't you know?

Satine. I don't. Do you?

[*THE TARTAR spits out, furiously, the others laugh at him*]

Zob [*good-naturedly*]. You're a funny fellow, Hassan! Try to understand this! If they should begin to live honestly, they'd die of starvation inside of three days.

The Tartar. That's none of my business. You must live honestly!

Zob. They did you brown! Come and let's have tea. . . . [*Sings*]

"O my chains, my heavy chains . . ."

Bubnoff [sings].

"You're my steely, clanking wardens . . ."

Zob. Come on, Hassanka! [Leaves the room, singing]

"I cannot tear you, cannot break you . . ."

[The TARTAR shakes his fist threateningly at the BARON, and follows the other out of the room]

Satine [to BARON, laughing]. Well, Your Imperial Highness, you've again sat down magnificently in a mud puddle! You've learned a lot—but you're an ignoramus when it comes to palming a card.

The Baron [spreading his hands]. The Devil knows how it happened. . . .

The Actor. You're not gifted—you've no faith in yourself—and without that you can never accomplish anything . . .

Miedviedieff. I've one Queen—and you've two—oh, well . . .

Bubnoff. One's enough if she has brains—play!

Kleshtch. You lost, Abram Ivanovitch?

Miedviedieff. None of your business—see? Shut up!

Satine. I've won fifty-three kopecks.

The Actor. Give me three of them . . . though, what'll I do with them?

Luka [coming from kitchen]. Well—the Tartar was fleeced all right, eh? Going to have some vodka?

The Baron. Come with us.

Satine. I wonder what you'll be like when you're drunk.

Luka. Same as when I'm sober.

The Actor. Come on, old man—I'll recite verses for you . . .

Luka. What?

The Actor. Verses. Don't you understand?

Luka. Verses? And what do I want with verses?

The Actor. Sometimes they're funny—sometimes sad.

Satine. Well, poet, are you coming?

[Exit with the BARON]

The Actor. I'm coming. I'll join you. For instance, old man, here's a bit of verse—I forget how it begins—I forget . . . *[Brushes his hand across his forehead]*

Bubnoff. There! Your Queen is lost—go on, play!

Miedviedieff. I made the wrong move.

The Actor. Formerly, before my organism was poisoned with alcohol, old man, I had a good memory. But now it's all over

with me, brother. I used to declaim these verses with tremendous success—thunders of applause . . . you have no idea what applause means . . . it goes to your head like vodka! I'd step out on the stage—stand this way—*[Strikes a pose]*—I'd stand there and . . . *[Pause]* I can't remember a word—I can't remember! My favorite verses— isn't it ghastly, old man?

Luka. Yes—is there anything worse than forgetting what you loved? Your very soul is in the thing you love!

The Actor. I've drunk my soul away, old man—brother, I'm lost . . . and why? Because I had no faith . . . I'm done with . . .

Luka. Well—then—cure yourself! Nowadays they have a cure for drunkards. They treat you free of charge, brother. There's a hospital for drunkards—where they're treated for nothing. They've owned up, you see, that even a drunkard is a human being, and they're only too glad to help him get well. Well—then—go to it!

The Actor [thoughtfully]. Where? Where is it?

Luka. Oh—in some town or other . . . what do they call it?—I'll tell you the name presently—only, in the meanwhile, get ready. Don't drink so much! Take yourself in hand—and bear up! And then, when you're cured, you'll begin life all over again. Sounds good, brother, doesn't it, to begin all over again? Well—make up your mind!

The Actor [smiling]. All over again—from the very beginning—that's fine . . . yes . . . all over again . . . *[Laughs]* Well—then—I can, can't I?

Luka. Why not? A human being can do anything—if he only makes up his mind.

The Actor [suddenly, as if coming out of a trance]. You're a queer bird! See you anon! *[Whistles]* Old man—*au revoir!*

[Exit]

Anna. Grand-dad!

Luka. Yes, little mother?

Anna. Talk to me.

Luka [close to her]. Come on—let's chat . . .

[KLESHTCH, glancing around, silently walks over to his wife, looks at her, and makes queer gestures with his hands, as though he wanted to say something]

Luka. What is it, brother?

Kleshtch [quietly]. Nothing . . .

[Crosses slowly to hallway door, stands on the threshold for a few seconds, and exits]

Luka *[looking after him]*. Hard on your man, isn't it?

Anna. He doesn't concern me much . . .

Luka. Did he beat you?

Anna. Worse than that—it's he who's killed me—

Bubnoff. My wife used to have a lover—the scoundrel—how clever he was at checkers!

Miedviedieff. Hm-hm—

Anna. Grand-dad! Talk to me, darling—I feel so sick . . .

Luka. Never mind—it's always like this before you die, little dove—never mind, dear! Just have faith! Once you're dead, you'll have peace—always. There's nothing to be afraid of—nothing. Quiet! Peace! Lie quietly! Death wipes out everything. Death is kindly. You die—and you rest—that's what they say. It is true, dear! Because—where can we find rest on this earth?

[PEPEL enters. He is slightly drunk, dishevelled, and sullen. Sits down on bunk near door, and remains silent and motionless]

Anna. And how is it—there? More suffering?

Luka. Nothing of the kind! No suffering! Trust me! Rest—nothing else! They'll lead you into God's presence, and they'll say: "Dear God! Behold! Here is Anna, Thy servant!"

Miedviedieff *[sternly]*. How do you know what they'll say up there? Oh, you . . .

[PEPEL, on hearing MIEDVIEDIEFF'S voice, raises his head and listens]

Luka. Apparently I do know, Mr. Sergeant!

Miedviedieff *[conciliatory]*. Yes—it's your own affair—though I'm not exactly a sergeant—yet—

Bubnoff. I jump two!

Miedviedieff. Damn—play!

Luka. And the Lord will look at you gently and tenderly and He'll say: "I know this Anna!" Then He'll say: "Take Anna into Paradise. Let her have peace. I know. Her life on earth was hard. She is very weary. Let Anna rest in peace!"

Anna *[choking]*. Grandfather—if it were

only so—if there were only rest and peace . . .

Luka. There won't be anything else! Trust me! Die in joy and not in grief. Death is to us like a mother to small children . . .

Anna. But—perhaps—perhaps I get well . . . ?

Luka *[laughing]*. Why? Just to suffer more?

Anna. But—just to live a little longer . . . just a little longer! Since there'll be no suffering hereafter, I could bear it a little longer down here . . .

Luka. There'll be nothing in the hereafter . . . but only . . .

Pepel *[rising]*. Maybe yes—maybe no!

Anna *[frightened]*. Oh—God!

Luka. Hey—Adonis!

Miedviedieff. Who's that yelping?

Pepel *[crossing over to him]*. I! What of it?

Miedviedieff. You yelp needlessly—that's what! People ought to have some dignity!

Pepel. Block-head! And that's an uncle for you—ho-ho!

Luka *[to PEPEL, in an undertone]*. Look here—don't shout—this woman's dying—her lips are already grey—don't disturb her!

Pepel. I've respect for you, grand-dad. You're all right, you are! You lie well, and you spin pleasant yarns. Go on lying, brother—there's little fun in this world . . .

Bubnoff. Is the woman really dying?

Luka. You think I'm joking?

Bubnoff. That means she'll stop coughing. Her cough was very disturbing. I jump two!

Miedviedieff. I'd like to murder you!

Pepel. Abramka!

Miedviedieff. I'm not Abramka to you!

Pepel. Abrashka! Is Natasha ill?

Miedviedieff. None of your business!

Pepel. Come—tell me! Did Vassilisa beat her up very badly?

Miedviedieff. That's none of your business, either! It's a family affair! Who are you anyway?

Pepel. Whoever I am, you'll never see Natasha again if I choose!

Miedviedieff *[throwing up the game]*. What's that? Who are you alluding to? My niece by any chance? You thief!

Pepel. A thief whom you were never able to catch!

Miedviedieff. Wait—I'll catch you yet—you'll see—sooner than you think!

Pepel. If you catch me, God help your whole nest! Do you think I'll keep quiet before the examining magistrate? Every wolf howls! They'll ask me: "Who made you steal and showed you where?" "Mishka Kostilyoff and his wife!" "Who was your fence?" "Mishka Kostilyoff and his wife!"

Miedviedieff. You lie! No one will believe you!

Pepel. They'll believe me all right—because it's the truth! And I'll drag you into it, too. Ha! I'll ruin the lot of you—devils—just watch!

Miedviedieff [*confused*]. You lie! You lie! And what harm did I do to you, you mad dog?

Pepel. And what good did you ever do me?

Luka. That's right!

Miedviedieff [*to LUKA*]. Well—what are you croaking about? Is it any of your business? This is a family matter!

Bubnoff [*to LUKA*]. Leave them alone! What do we care if they twist each other's tails?

Luka [*peacefully*]. I meant no harm. All I said was that if a man isn't good to you, then he's acting wrong. . . .

Miedviedieff [*uncomprehending*]. Now then—we all of us here know each other—but you—who are you?

[*Frowns and exit*]

Luka. The cavalier is peeved! Oh-ho, brothers, I see your affairs are a bit tangled up!

Pepel. He'll run to complain about us to Vassilisa . . .

Bubnoff. You're a fool, Vassily. You're very bold these days, aren't you? Watch out! It's all right to be bold when you go gathering mushrooms, but what good is it here? They'll break your neck before you know it!

Pepel. Well—not as fast as all that! You don't catch us Yaroslavl boys napping! If it's going to be war, we'll fight . . .

Luka. Look here, boy, you really ought to go away from here—

Pepel. Where? Please tell me!

Luka. Go to Siberia!

Pepel. If I go to Siberia, it'll be at the Tsar's expense!

Luka. Listen! You go just the same!

You can make your own way there. They need your kind out there . . .

Pepel. My way is clear. My father spent all his life in prison, and I inherited the trait. Even when I was a small child, they called me thief—thief's son.

Luka. But Siberia is a fine country—a land of gold. Any one who has health and strength and brains can live there like a cucumber in a hothouse.

Pepel. Old man, why do you always tell lies?

Luka. What?

Pepel. Are you deaf? I ask—why do you always lie?

Luka. What do I lie about?

Pepel. About everything. According to you, life's wonderful everywhere—but you lie . . . why?

Luka. Try to believe me. Go and see for yourself. And some day you'll thank me for it. What are you hanging round here for? And, besides, why is truth so important to you? Just think! Truth may spell death to you!

Pepel. It's all one to me! If that—let it be that!

Luka. Oh—what a madman! Why should you kill yourself?

Bubnoff. What are you two jawing about, anyway? I don't understand. What kind of truth do you want, Vaska? And what for? You know the truth about yourself—and so does everybody else . . .

Pepel. Just a moment! Don't crow! Let him tell me! Listen, old man! Is there a God?

[*LUKA smiles silently*]

Bubnoff. People just drift along—like shavings on a stream. When a house is built—the shavings are thrown away!

Pepel. Well? Is there a God? Tell me.

Luka [*in a low voice*]. If you have faith, there is; if you haven't, there isn't . . . whatever you believe in, exists . . .

[*PEPEL looks at LUKA in staring surprise*]

Bubnoff. I'm going to have tea—come on over to the restaurant!

Luka [*to PEPEL*]. What are you staring at?

Pepel. Oh—just because! Wait now—you mean to say . . .

Bubnoff. Well—I'm off.

[*Goes to door and runs into VASSILISA*]

Pepel. So—you . . .

Vassilisa [to BUBNOFF]. Is Nastasya home?

Bubnoff. No. [Exit]

Pepel. Oh—you've come—?

Vassilisa [crossing to ANNA]. Is she alive yet?

Luka. Don't disturb her!

Vassilisa. What are you loafing around here for?

Luka. I'll go—if you want me to . . .

Vassilisa [turning towards PEPEL's room]. Vassily! I've some business with you . . .

[LUKA goes to hallway door, opens it, and shuts it loudly, then warily climbs into a bunk, and from there to the top of the stove]

Vassilisa [calling from PEPEL's room]. Vaska—come here!

Pepel. I won't come—I don't want to . . .

Vassilisa. Why? What are you angry about?

Pepel. I'm sick of the whole thing . . .

Vassilisa. Sick of me, too?

Pepel. Yes! Of you, too!

[VASSILISA draws her shawl about her, pressing her hands over her breast. Crosses to ANNA, looks carefully through the bed curtains, and returns to PEPEL]

Well—out with it!

Vassilisa. What do you want me to say? I can't force you to be loving, and I'm not the sort to beg for kindness. Thank you for telling me the truth.

Pepel. What truth?

Vassilisa. That you're sick of me—or isn't it the truth? [PEPEL looks at her silently. She turns to him] What are you staring at? Don't you recognize me?

Pepel [sighing]. You're beautiful, Vassilisa! [She puts her arm about his neck, but he shakes it off] But I never gave my heart to you. . . . I've lived with you and all that—But I never really liked you . . .

Vassilisa [quietly]. That so? Well—?

Pepel. What is there to talk about? Nothing. Go away from me!

Vassilisa. Taken a fancy to some one else?

Pepel. None of your business! Suppose I have—I wouldn't ask you to be my match-maker!

Vassilisa [significantly]. That's too bad . . . perhaps I might arrange a match . . .

Pepel [suspiciously]. Who with?

Vassilisa. You know—why do you pretend? Vassily—let me be frank. [With lower voice] I won't deny it—you've offended me . . . it was like a bolt from the blue . . . you said you loved me—and then all of a sudden . . .

Pepel. It wasn't sudden at all. It's been a long time since I . . . woman, you've no soul! A woman must have a soul . . . we men are beasts—we must be taught—and you, what have you taught me—?

Vassilisa. Never mind the past! I know—no man owns his own heart—you don't love me any longer . . . well and good, it can't be helped!

Pepel. So that's over. We part peaceably, without a row—as it should be!

Vassilisa. Just a moment! All the same, when I lived with you, I hoped you'd help me out of this swamp—I thought you'd free me from my husband and my uncle—from all this life—and perhaps, Vassya, it wasn't you whom I loved—but my hope—do you understand I waited for you to drag me out of this mire . . .

Pepel. You aren't a nail—and I'm not a pair of pincers! I thought you had brains—you are so clever—so crafty . . .

Vassilisa [leaning closely towards him]. Vassa—Let's help each other!

Pepel. How?

Vassilisa [low and forcibly]. My sister—I know you've fallen for her . . .

Pepel. And that's why you beat her up, like the beast you are! Look out, Vassilisa! Don't you touch her!

Vassilisa. Wait. Don't get excited. We can do everything quietly and pleasantly. You want to marry her. I'll give you money . . . three hundred rubles—even more than . . .

Pepel [moving away from her]. Stop! What do you mean?

Vassilisa. Rid me of my husband! Take that noose from around my neck . . .

Pepel [whistling softly]. So that's the way the land lies! You certainly planned it cleverly . . . in other words, the grave for the husband, the gallows for the lover, and as for yourself . . .

Vassilisa. Vassya! Why the gallows? It doesn't have to be yourself—but one of your pals! And supposing it were yourself—who'd know? Natalia—just think—and you'll have money—you go away somewhere . . . you free me forever—and it'll be

very good for my sister to be away from me—the sight of her enrages me. . . . I get furious with her on account of you, and I can't control myself. I tortured the girl—I beat her up—beat her up so that I myself cried with pity for her—but I'll beat her—and I'll go on beating her!

Pepel. Beast! Bragging about your beastliness?

Vassilisa. I'm not bragging—I speak the truth. Think now, Vassa. You've been to prison twice because of my husband—through his greed. He clings to me like a bed-bug—he's been sucking the life out of me for the last four years—and what sort of a husband is he to me? He's forever abusing Natasha—calls her a beggar—he's just poison, plain poison, to every one . . .

Pepel. You spin your yarn cleverly . . .

Vassilisa. Everything I say is true. Only a fool could be as blind as you. . . .

[KOSTILYOFF enters stealthily and comes forward noisily]

Pepel [to VASSILISA]. Oh—go away!

Vassilisa. Think it over! [Sees her husband] What? You? Following me?

[PEPEL leaps up and stares at KOSTILYOFF savagely]

Kostilyoff. It's I, I! So the two of you were here alone—you were—ah—conversing? [Suddenly stamps his feet and screams] *Vassilisa*—you bitch! You beggar! You damned hag! [Frightened by his own screams which are met by silence and indifference on the part of the others] Forgive me, O Lord . . . *Vassilisa*—again you've led me into the path of sin. . . . I've been looking for you everywhere. It's time to go to bed. You forgot to fill the lamps—oh, you . . . beggar! Swine! [Shakes his trembling fist at her, while VASSILISA slowly goes to door, glancing at PEPEL over her shoulder]

Pepel [to KOSTILYOFF]. Go away—clear out of here—

Kostilyoff [yelling]. What? I? The Boss? I get out? You thief!

Pepel [sullenly]. Go away, Mishka!

Kostilyoff. Don't you dare—I—I'll show you.

[PEPEL seizes him by the collar and shakes him. From the stove come loud noises and yawns. PEPEL releases KOSTILYOFF who runs into the hallway, screaming]

Pepel [jumping on a bunk]. Who is it? Who's on the stove?

Luka [raising his head]. Eh?

Pepel. You?

Luka [undisturbed]. I—I myself—oh, dear Jesus!

Pepel [shuts hallway door, looks for the wooden closing bar, but can't find it]. The devil! Come down, old man!

Luka. I'm climbing down—all right . . .

Pepel [roughly]. What did you climb on that stove for?

Luka. Where was I to go?

Pepel. Why—didn't you go out into the hall?

Luka. The hall's too cold for an old fellow like myself, brother.

Pepel. You overheard?

Luka. Yes—I did. How could I help it? Am I deaf? Well, my boy, happiness is coming your way. Real, good fortune I call it!

Pepel [suspiciously]. What good fortune—?

Luka. In so far as I was lying on the stove . . .

Pepel. Why did you make all that noise?

Luka. Because I was getting warm . . . it was your good luck . . . I thought if only the boy wouldn't make a mistake and choke the old man . . .

Pepel. Yes—I might have done it . . . how terrible . . .

Luka. Small wonder! It isn't difficult to make a mistake of that sort.

Pepel [smiling]. What's the matter? Did you make the same sort of mistake once upon a time?

Luka. Boy, listen to me. Send that woman out of your life! Don't let her near you! Her husband—she'll get rid of him herself—and in a shrewder way than you could—yes! Don't you listen to that devil! Look at me! I am bald-headed—know why? Because of all these women. . . . Perhaps I knew more women than I had hair on the top of my head—but this *Vassilisa*—she's worse than the plague. . . .

Pepel. I don't understand . . . I don't know whether to thank you—or—well . . .

Luka. Don't say a word! You won't improve on what I said. Listen: take the one you like by the arm, and march out of here—get out of here—clean out . . .

Pepel [sadly]. I can't understand people.

Who is kind and who isn't? It's all a mystery to me . . .

Luka. What's there to understand? There's all breeds of men . . . they all live as their hearts tell them . . . good to-day, bad to-morrow! But if you really care for that girl . . . take her away from here and that's all there is to it. Otherwise go away alone . . . you're young—you're in no hurry for a wife . . .

Pepel [taking him by the shoulder]. Tell me! Why do you say all this?

Luka. Wait. Let me go. I want a look at Anna . . . she was coughing so terribly . . . [*Goes to ANNA'S bed, pulls the curtains, looks, touches her.* PEPEL, thoughtfully and distraught, follows him with his eyes] Merciful Jesus Christ! Take into Thy keeping the soul of this woman Anna, newcomer amongst the blessed!

Pepel [softly]. Is she dead?

[*Without approaching, he stretches himself and looks at the bed*]

Luka [gently]. Her sufferings are over! Where's her husband?

Pepel. In the saloon, most likely . . .

Luka. Well—he'll have to be told . . .

Pepel [shuddering]. I don't like corpses!

Luka [going to door]. Why should you like them? It's the living who demand our love—the living . . .

Pepel. I'm coming with you . . .

Luka. Are you afraid?

Pepel. I don't like it . . .

[*They go out quickly. The stage is empty and silent for a few moments. Behind the door is heard a dull, staccato, incomprehensible noise. Then the Actor enters*]

The Actor [stands at the open door, supporting himself against the jamb, and shouts]. Hey, old man—where are you? I just remembered—listen . . . [*Takes two staggering steps forward and, striking a pose, recites*]

"Good people! If the world cannot find
A path to holy truth,
Glory be to the madman who will enfold
all humanity

In a golden dream . . ."

[*NATASHA appears in the doorway behind the Actor*]

Old man! [*Recites*]

"If to-morrow the sun were to forget

To light our earth,

To-morrow then some madman's thought

Would bathe the world in sunshine. . . ."

Natasha [laughing]. Scarecrow! You're drunk!

The Actor [turns to her]. Oh—it's you? Where's the old man, the dear old man? Not a soul here, seems to me . . . Natasha, farewell—right—farewell!

Natasha [entering]. Don't wish me farewell, before you've wished me how-d'you-do!

The Actor [barring her way]. I am going. Spring will come—and I'll be here no longer—

Natasha. Wait a moment! Where do you propose going?

The Actor. In search of a town—to be cured—And you, Ophelia, must go away! Take the veil! Just imagine—there's a hospital to cure—ah—organisms for drunkards—a wonderful hospital—built of marble—with marble floors . . . light—clean—food—and all gratis! And a marble floor—yes! I'll find it—I'll get cured—and then I shall start life anew. . . . I'm on my way to regeneration, as King Lear said. Natasha, my stage name is . . . Svertch'koff—Zavoloushski . . . do you realize how painful it is to lose one's name? Even dogs have their names . . .

[*NATASHA carefully passes the Actor, stops at ANNA'S bed and looks*]

To be nameless—is not to exist!

Natasha. Look, my dear—why—she's dead. . . .

The Actor [shakes his head]. Impossible . . .

Natasha [stepping back]. So help me God—look . . .

Bubnoff [appearing in doorway]. What is there to look at?

Natasha. Anna—she's dead!

Bubnoff. That means—she's stopped coughing! [*Goes to ANNA'S bed, looks, and returns to his bunk*] We must tell Kleshtch—it's his business to know . . .

The Actor. I'll go—I'll say to him—she lost her name— [*Exit*]

Natasha [in centre of room]. I, too—some day—I'll be found in the cellar—dead. . . .

Bubnoff [spreading out some rags on his bunk]. What's that? What are you muttering?

Natasha. Nothing much . . .

Bubnoff. Waiting for Vaska, eh? Take care—Vassilisa'll break your head!

Natasha. Isn't it the same who breaks it? I'd much rather he'd do it!

Bubnoff [*lying down*]. Well—that's your own affair . . .

Natasha. It's best for her to be dead—yet it's a pity . . . oh, Lord—why do we live?

Bubnoff. It's so with all . . . we're born, live, and die—and I'll die, too—and so'll you—what's there to be gloomy about?

[*Enter* *LUKA*, *the TARTAR*, *ZOB*, and *KLESHTCH*. *The latter comes after the others, slowly, shrunk up*]

Natasha. Sh-sh! Anna!

Zob. We've heard—God rest her soul . . .

The Tartar [*to KLESHTCH*]. We must take her out of here. Out into the hall! This is no place for corpses—but for the living . . .

Kleshtch [*quietly*]. We'll take her out—

[*Everybody goes to the bed, KLESHTCH looks at his wife over the others' shoulders*]

Zob [*to the TARTAR*]. You think she'll smell? I don't think she will—she dried up while she was still alive . . .

Natasha. God! If they'd only a little pity . . . if only some one would say a kindly word—oh, you . . .

Luka. Don't be hurt, girl—never mind! Why and how should we pity the dead? We don't pity the living—we can't even pity our own selves—how can we?

Bubnoff [*yawning*]. And, besides, when you're dead, no word will help you—when you're still alive, even sick, it may. . . .

The Tartar [*stepping aside*]. The police must be notified . . .

Zob. The police—must be done! *Kleshtch*! Did you notify the police?

Kleshtch. No—she's got to be buried—and all I have is forty kopecks—

Zob. Well—you'll have to borrow then—otherwise we'll take up a collection . . . one'll give five kopecks, others as much as they can. But the police must be notified at once—or they'll think you killed her or God knows what not . . .

[*Crosses to the TARTAR's bunk and prepares to lie down by his side*]

Natasha [*going to BUBNOFF's bunk*]. Now—I'll dream of her . . . I always dream of the dead . . . I'm afraid to go out into the hall by myself—it's dark there . . .

Luka [*following her*]. You better fear the living—I'm telling you . . .

Natasha. Take me across the hall, grandfather.

Luka. Come on—come on—I'll take you across—

[*They go away. Pause*]

Zob [*to the TARTAR*]. Oh-ho! Spring will soon be here, little brother, and it'll be quite warm. In the villages the peasants are already making ready their ploughs and harrows, preparing to till . . . and we . . . Hassan? Snoring already? Damned Mohammedan!

Bubnoff. Tartars love sleep!

Kleshtch [*in centre of room, staring in front of him*]. What am I to do now?

Zob. Lie down and sleep—that's all . . .

Kleshtch [*softly*]. But—she . . . how about . . .

[*No one answers him. SATINE and the Actor enter*]

The Actor [*yelling*]. Old man! Come here, my trusted Duke of Kent!

Satine. Miklookha-Maklai is coming—ho-ho!

The Actor. It has been decided upon! Old man, where's the town—where are you?

Satine. Fata Morgana, the old man bilked you from top to bottom! There's nothing—no towns—no people—nothing at all!

The Actor. You lie!

The Tartar [*jumping up*]. Where's the boss? I'm going to the boss. If I can't sleep, I won't pay! Corpses—drunkards . . . [*Exit quickly*]

[*SATINE looks after him and whistles*]

Bubnoff [*in a sleepy voice*]. Go to bed, boys—be quiet . . . night is for sleep . . .

The Actor. Yes—so—there's a corpse here. . . . "Our net fished up a corpse. . . ." Verses—by Béranger. . . .

Satine [*screams*]. The dead can't hear . . . the dead do not feel—Scream!—Roar! . . . the dead don't hear!

[*In the doorway appears* *LUKA*]

ACT THREE

"The Waste," a yard strewn with rubbish and overgrown with weeds. Back, a high brick wall which shuts out the sight of the sky. Near it are elder-bushes. Right, the dark, wooden wall of some sort of house, barn or stable. Left, the grey tumbledown

wall of KOSTILYOFF's night asylum. It is built at an angle so that the further corner reaches almost to the center of the yard. Between it and the wall runs a narrow passage. In the grey, plastered wall are two windows, one on a level with the ground, the other about six feet higher up and closer to the brick wall. Near the latter wall is a big sledge turned upside down and a beam about twelve feet long. Right of the wall is a heap of old planks. Evening. The sun is setting, throwing a crimson light on the brick wall. Early spring, the snow having only recently melted. The elder-bushes are not yet in bud.

NATASHA and NASTYA are sitting side by side on the beam. LUKA and the BARON are on the sledge. KLESETCH is stretched on the pile of planks to the right. BUBNOFF's face is at the ground floor window.

NASTYA [with closed eyes, nodding her head in rhythm to the tale she is telling in a sing-song voice]. So then at night he came into the garden. I had been waiting for him quite a while. I trembled with fear and grief—he trembled, too . . . he was as white as chalk—and he had the pistol in his hand . . .

Natasha [chewing sunflower seeds]. Oh—are these students really such desperate fellows? . . .

NASTYA. And he says to me in a dreadful voice: "My precious darling . . ."

Bubnoff. Ho-ho! Precious—?

The Baron. Shut up! If you don't like it, you can lump it! But don't interrupt her. . . . Go on . . .

NASTYA. "My one and only love," he says, "my parents," he says, "refuse to give their consent to our wedding—and threaten to disown me because of my love for you. Therefore," he says, "I must take my life." And his pistol was huge—and loaded with ten bullets. . . . "Farewell," he says, "beloved comrade! I have made up my mind for good and all . . . I can't live without you . . ." and I replied: "My unforgettable friend—my Raoul. . . ."

Bubnoff [surprised]. What? What? Krawl—did you call him—?

The Baron. NASTYA! But last time his name was Gaston. . . .

NASTYA [jumping up]. Shut up, you bastards! Ah—you lousy mongrels! You think for a moment that you can understand love—true love? My love was real

honest-to-God love! [To the BARON] You good-for-nothing! . . . educated, you call yourself—drinking coffee in bed, did you?

Luka. Now, now! Wait, people! Don't interfere! Show a little respect to your neighbours . . . it isn't the word that matters, but what's in back of the word. That's what matters! Go on, girl! it's all right!

Bubnoff. Go on, crow! See if you can make your feathers white!

The Baron. Well—continue!

Natasha. Pay no attention to them . . . what are they? They're just jealous . . . they've nothing to tell about themselves . . .

NASTYA [sits down again]. I'm going to say no more! If they don't believe me they'll laugh. [Stops suddenly, is silent for a few seconds, then, shutting her eyes, continues in a loud and intense voice, swaying her hands as if to the rhythm of far music] And then I replied to him: "Joy of my life! My bright moon! And I, too, I can't live without you—because I love you madly, so madly—and I shall keep on loving you as long as my heart beats in my bosom. But—" I say—"don't take your young life! Think how necessary it is to your dear parents whose only happiness you are. Leave me! Better that I should perish from longing for you, my life! I alone! I—ah—as such, such! Better that I should die—it doesn't matter . . . I am of no use to the world—and I have nothing, nothing at all—"

[Covers her face with her hand and weeps gently]

Natasha [in a low voice]. Don't cry—don't!

[LUKA, smiling, strokes NASTYA's head]

Bubnoff [laughs]. Ah—you limb of Satan!

The Baron [also laughs]. Hey, old man? Do you think it's true? It's all from that book, *Fatal Love* . . . it's all nonsense! Let her alone!

Natasha. And what's it to you? Shut up—or God'll punish you!

NASTYA [bitterly]. God damn your soul! You worthless pig! Soul—bah!—you haven't got one!

Luka [takes NASTYA's hand]. Come, dear! it's nothing! Don't be angry—I know—I believe you! You're right, not they! If you believe you had a real love affair, then you did—yes! And as for him—don't be angry with a fellow-lodger . . . maybe he's

really jealous, and that's why he's laughing. Maybe he never had any real love—maybe not—come on—let's go!

Nastya [pressing her hand against her breast]. Grandfather! So help me God—it happened! It happened! He was a student, a Frenchman—Gastotcha was his name—he had a little black beard—and patent leathers—may God strike me dead if I'm lying! And he loved me so—my God, how he loved me!

Luka. Yes, yes, it's all right. I believe you! Patent leathers, you said? Well, well, well—and you loved him, did you?

[Disappears with her around the corner]

The Baron. God— isn't she a fool, though? She's good-hearted—but such a fool—it's past belief!

Bubnoff. And why are people so fond of lying—just as if they were up before the judge—really!

Natasha. I guess lying is more fun than speaking the truth—I, too . . .

The Baron. What—you, too? Go on!

Natasha. Oh—I imagine things—invent them—and I wait—

The Baron. For what?

Natasha [smiling confusedly]. Oh—I think that perhaps—well—to-morrow somebody will really appear—some one—oh—out of the ordinary—or something'll happen—also out of the ordinary. . . . I've been waiting for it—oh—always. . . . But, really, what is there to wait for? [Pause]

The Baron [with a slight smile]. Nothing—I expect nothing! What is past, is past! Through! Over with! And then what?

Natasha. And then—well—to-morrow I imagine suddenly that I'll die—and I get frightened . . . in summer it's all right to dream of death—then there are thunder storms—one might get struck by lightning . . .

The Baron. You've a hard life . . . your sister's a wicked-tempered devil!

Natasha. Tell me—does anybody live happily? It's hard for all of us—I can see that . . .

Kleshtch [who until this moment has sat motionless and indifferent, jumps up suddenly]. For all? You lie! Not for all! If it were so—all right! Then it wouldn't hurt—yes!

Bubnoff. What in hell's bit you? Just listen to him yelping!

[*KLESHTCH* lies down again and grunts] *The Baron*. Well—I'd better go and make my peace with Nastinka—if I don't, she won't treat me to vodka . . .

Bubnoff. Hm—people love to lie . . . with Nastya—I can see the reason why. She's used to painting that mutt of hers—and now she wants to paint her soul as well . . . put rouge on her soul, eh? But the others—why do they? Take Luka for instance—he lies a lot . . . and what does he get out of it? He's an old fellow, too—why does he do it?

The Baron [smiling and walking away]. All people have drab-colored souls—and they like to brighten them up a bit . . .

Luka [appearing from round the corner]. You, sir, why do you tease the girl? Leave her alone—let her cry if it amuses her . . . she weeps for her own pleasure—what harm is it to you?

The Baron. Nonsense, old man! She's a nuisance. Raoul to-day, Gaston to-morrow—always the same old yarn, though! Still—I'll go and make up with her. [Leaves]

Luka. That's right—go—and be nice to her. Being nice to people never does them any harm . . .

Natasha. You're so good, little father—why are you so good?

Luka. Good, did you say? Well—call it that! [Behind the brick wall is heard soft singing and the sounds of a concertina] Some one has to be kind, girl—some one must pity people! Christ pitied everybody—and he said to us: "Go and do likewise!" I tell you—if you pity a man when he most needs it, good comes of it. Why—I used to be a watchman on the estate of an engineer near Tomsk—all right—the house was right in the middle of a forest—lonely place—winter came—and I remained all by myself. Well—one night I heard a noise—

Natasha. Thieves?

Luka. Exactly! Thieves creeping in! I took my gun—I went out. I looked and saw two of them opening a window—and so busy that they didn't even see me. I yell: "Hey there—get out of here!" And they turn on me with their axes—I warn them to stand back, or I'd shoot—and as I speak, I keep on covering them with my gun, first the one, then the other—they go down on their knees, as if to implore me for mercy. And by that time I was furious—because of those axes, you see—and so I say to them:

"I was chasing you, you scoundrels—and you didn't go. Now you go and break off some stout branches!"—and they did so—and I say: "Now—one of you lie down and let the other one flog him!" So they obey me and flog each other—and then they begin to implore me again. "Grandfather," they say, "for God's sake give us some bread! We're hungry!" There's thieves for you, my dear! [*Laughs*] And with an ax, too! Yes—honest peasants, both of them! And I say to them, "You should have asked for bread straight away!" And they say: "We got tired of asking—you beg and beg—and nobody gives you a crumb—it hurts!" So they stayed with me all that winter—one of them, Stepan, would take my gun and go shooting in the forest—and the other, Yakoff, was ill most of the time—he coughed a lot . . . and so the three of us together looked after the house . . . then spring came . . . "Good-bye, grandfather," they said—and they went away—back home to Russia . . .

Natasha. Were they escaped convicts?

Luka. That's just what they were—escaped convicts—from a Siberian prison camp . . . honest peasants! If I hadn't felt sorry for them—they might have killed me—or maybe worse—and then there would have been trial and prison and afterwards Siberia—what's the sense of it? Prison teaches no good—and Siberia doesn't either—but another human being can . . . yes, a human being can teach another one kindness—very simply! [*Pause*]

Bubnoff. Hm—yes—I, for instance, don't know how to lie . . . why—as far as I'm concerned, I believe in coming out with the whole truth and putting it on thick . . . why fuss about it?

Kleshtch [*again jumps up as if his clothes were on fire, and screams*]. What truth? Where is there truth? [*Tearing at his ragged clothes*] Here's truth for you! No work! No strength! That's the only truth! Shelter—there's no shelter! You die—that's the truth! Hell! What do I want with the truth? Let me breathe! Why should I be blamed? What do I want with truth? To live—Christ Almighty!—they won't let you live—and that's another truth!

Bubnoff. He's mad!

Luka. Dear Lord . . . listen to me, brother—

Kleshtch [*trembling with excitement*]. They say: there's truth! You, old man, try to console every one . . . I tell you—I hate every one! And there's your truth—God curse it—understand? I tell you—God curse it!

[*Rushes away round the corner, turning as he goes*]

Luka. Ah—how excited he got! Where did he run off to?

Natasha. He's off his head . . .

Bubnoff. God—didn't he say a whole lot, though? As if he was playing drama—he gets those fits often . . . he isn't used to life yet . . .

Pepel [*comes slowly round the corner*]. Peace on all this honest gathering! Well, Luka, you wily old fellow—still telling them stories?

Luka. You should have heard how that fellow carried on!

Pepel. Kleshtch—wasn't it? What's wrong with him? He was running like one possessed!

Luka. You'd do the same if your own heart were breaking!

Pepel [*sitting down*]. I don't like him . . . he's got such a nasty, bad temper—and so proud! [*Imitating KLESHTCH*] "I'm a workman!" And he thinks everyone's beneath him. Go on working if you feel like it—nothing to be so damned haughty about! If work is the standard—a horse can give us points—pulls like hell and says nothing! Natasha—are your folks at home?

Natasha. They went to the cemetery—then to night service . . .

Pepel. So that's why you're free for once—quite a novelty.

Luka [*to BUBNOFF, thoughtfully*]. There—you say—truth! Truth doesn't always heal a wounded soul. For instance, I knew of a man who believed in a land of righteousness . . .

Bubnoff. In what?

Luka. In a land of righteousness. He said: "Somewhere on this earth there must be a righteous land—and wonderful people live there—good people! They respect each other, help each other, and everything is peaceful and good!" And so that man—who was always searching for this land of righteousness—he was poor and lived miserably—and when things got to be so bad with him that it seemed there was nothing

else for him to do except lie down and die—even then he never lost heart—but he'd just smile and say: "Never mind! I can stand it! A little while longer—and I'll have done with this life—and I'll go in search of the righteous land!"—it was his one happiness—the thought of that land . . .

Pepel. Well? Did he go there?

Bubnoff. Where? Ho-ho!

Luka. And then to this place—in Siberia, by the way—there came a convict—a learned man with books and maps—yes, a learned man who knew all sorts of things—and the other man said to him: "Do me a favor—show me where is the land of righteousness and how I can get there." At once the learned man opened his books, spread out his maps, and looked and looked and he said—no—he couldn't find this land anywhere . . . everything was correct—all the lands on earth were marked—but not this land of righteousness . . .

Pepel [in a low voice]. Well? Wasn't there a trace of it?

[BUBNOFF roars with laughter]

Natasha. Wait . . . well, little father?

Luka. The man wouldn't believe it. . . . "It must exist," he said, "look carefully. Otherwise," he says, "your books and maps are of no use if there's no land of righteousness." The learned man was offended. "My plans," he said, "are correct. But there exists no land of righteousness anywhere." Well, then the other man got angry. He'd lived and lived and suffered and suffered, and had believed all the time in the existence of this land—and now, according to the plans, it didn't exist at all. He felt robbed! And he said to the learned man: "Ah—you scum of the earth! You're not a learned man at all—but just a damned cheat!"—and he gave him a good wallop in the eye—then another one . . . [After a moment's silence] And then he went home and hanged himself!

[All are silent. *LUKA, smiling, looks at PEPEL and NATASHA*]

Pepel [low-voiced]. To hell with this story—it isn't very cheerful . . .

Natasha. He couldn't stand the disappointment . . .

Bubnoff [sullen]. Ah—it's nothing but a fairy-tale . . .

Pepel. Well—there is the righteous land for you—doesn't exist, it seems . . .

Natasha. I'm sorry for that man . . .

Bubnoff. All a story—ho-ho!—land of righteousness—what an idea! [Exit through window]

Luka [pointing to window]. He's laughing! [Pause] Well, children, God be with you! I'll leave you soon . . .

Pepel. Where are you going to?

Luka. To the Ukraine—I heard they discovered a new religion there—I want to see—yes! People are always seeking—they always want something better—God grant them patience!

Pepel. You think they'll find it?

Luka. The people? They will find it! He who seeks, will find! He who desires strongly, will find!

Natasha. If only they could find something better—invent something better . . .

Luka. They're trying to! But we must help them, girl—we must respect them . . .

Natasha. How can I help them? I am helpless myself!

Pepel [determined]. Again—listen—I'll speak to you again, Natasha—here—before him—he knows everything . . . run away with me?

Natasha. Where? From one prison to another?

Pepel. I told you—I'm through with being a thief, so help me God! I'll quit! If I say so, I'll do it! I can read and write—I'll work—He's been telling me to go to Siberia on my own hook—let's go there together, what do you say? Do you think I'm not disgusted with my life? Oh—Natasha—I know . . . I see . . . I console myself with the thought that there are lots of people who are honored and respected—and who are bigger thieves than I! But what good is that to me? It isn't that I repent . . . I've no conscience . . . but I do feel one thing: One must live differently. One must live a better life . . . one must be able to respect one's own self . . .

Luka. That's right, friend! May God help you! It's true! A man must respect himself!

Pepel. I've been a thief from childhood on. Everybody always called me "Vaska—the thief—the son of a thief!" Oh—very well then—I am a thief— . . . just imagine—now, perhaps, I'm a thief out of spite—perhaps I'm a thief because no one ever called me anything different. . . . Well, Natasha—?

Natasha [sadly]. Somehow I don't be-

lieve in words—and I'm restless today—my heart is heavy . . . as if I were expecting something . . . it's a pity, Vassily, that you talked to me to-day . . .

Pepel. When should I? It isn't the first time I speak to you . . .

Natasha. And why should I go with you? I don't love you so very much—sometimes I like you—and other times the mere sight of you makes me sick . . . it seems—no—I don't really love you . . . when one really loves, one sees no fault. . . . But I do see . . .

Pepel. Never mind—you'll love me after a while! I'll make you care for me . . . if you'll just say yes! For over a year I've watched you . . . you're a decent girl . . . you're kind—you're reliable—I'm very much in love with you . . .

[*VASSILISA, in her best dress, appears at window and listens*]

Natasha. Yes—you love me—but how about my sister? . . .

Pepel [confused]. Well, what of her? There are plenty like her . . .

Luka. You'll be all right, girl! If there's no bread, you have to eat weeds . . .

Pepel [gloomily]. Please—feel a little sorry for me! My life isn't all roses—it's a hell of a life . . . little happiness in it . . . I feel as if a swamp were sucking me under . . . and whatever I try to catch and hold on to, is rotten . . . it breaks . . . Your sister—oh—I thought she was different . . . if she weren't so greedy after money . . . I'd have done anything for her sake, if she were only all mine . . . but she must have someone else . . . and she has to have money—and freedom . . . because she doesn't like the straight and narrow . . . she can't help me. But you're like a young fir-tree . . . you bend, but you don't break . . .

Luka. Yes—go with him, girl, go! He's a good lad—he's all right! Only tell him every now and then that he's a good lad so that he won't forget it—and he'll believe you. Just you keep on telling him "Vasya, you're a good man—don't you forget it!" Just think, dear, where else could you go except with him? Your sister is a savage beast . . . and as for her husband, there's little to say of him. He's rotten beyond words . . . and all this life here, where will it get you? But this lad is strong . . .

Natasha. Nowhere to go—I know—I thought of it. The only thing is—I've no

faith in anybody—and there's no place for me to turn to . . .

Pepel. Yes, there is! But I won't let you go that way—I'd rather cut your throat!

Natasha [smiling]. There—I'm not his wife yet—and he talks already of killing me!

Pepel [puts his arms around her]. Come, Natasha! Say yes!

Natasha [holding him close]. But I'll tell you one thing, Vassily—I swear it before God . . . the first time you strike me or hurt me any other way, I'll have no pity on myself . . . I'll either hang myself . . . or . . .

Pepel. May my hand wither if ever I touch you!

Luka. Don't doubt him, dear! He needs you more than you need him!

Vassilisa [from the window]. So now they're engaged! Love and advice!

Natasha. They've come back—oh, God—they saw—oh, Vassily . . .

Pepel. Why are you frightened? Nobody'll dare touch you now!

Vassilisa. Don't be afraid, Natalia! He won't beat you . . . he don't know how to love or how to beat . . . I know!

Luka [in a low voice]. Rotten old hag—like a snake in the grass . . .

Vassilisa. He dares only with the word!

Kostilyoff [enters]. Natasha! What are you doing here, you parasite? Gossiping? Kicking about your family? And the samovar not ready? And the table not cleared?

Natasha [going out]. I thought you were going to church . . . ?

Kostilyoff. None of your business what we intended doing! Mind your own affairs—and do what you're told!

Pepel. Shut up, you! She's no longer your servant! Don't go, Natalia—don't do a thing!

Natasha. Stop ordering me about—you're commencing too soon! [*Leaves*]

Pepel [to *KOSTILYOFF*]. That's enough. You've used her long enough—now she's mine!

Kostilyoff. Yours? When did you buy her—and for how much?

[*VASSILISA roars with laughter*]

Luka. Go away, Vasya!

Pepel. Don't laugh, you fools—or first thing you know I'll make you cry!

Vassilisa. Oh, how terrible! Oh—how you frighten me!

Luka. Vassily—go away! Don't you see—she's goading you on . . . ridiculing you, don't you understand? . . .

Pepel. Yes . . . You lie, lie! You won't get what you want!

Vassilisa. Nor will I get what I don't want, Vasya!

Pepel [shaking his fist at her]. We'll see . . . [Exit]

Vassilisa [disappearing through window]. I'll arrange some wedding for you . . .

Kostilyoff [crossing to LUKA]. Well, old man, how's everything?

Luka. All right!

Kostilyoff. You're going away, they say—?

Luka. Soon.

Kostilyoff. Where to?

Luka. I'll follow my nose . . .

Kostilyoff. Tramping, eh? Don't like stopping in one place all the time, do you?

Luka. Even water won't pass beneath a stone that's sunk too firmly in the ground, they say . . .

Kostilyoff. That's true for a stone. But man must settle in one place. Men can't live like cockroaches, crawling about wherever they want. . . . A man must stick to one place—and not wander about aimlessly . . .

Luka. But suppose his home is wherever he hangs his hat?

Kostilyoff. Why, then—he's a vagabond—useless . . . a human being must be of some sort of use—he must work . . .

Luka. That's what you think, eh?

Kostilyoff. Yes—sure . . . just look! What's a vagabond? A strange fellow . . . unlike all others. If he's a real pilgrim then he's some good in the world . . . perhaps he discovered a new truth. Well—but not every truth is worth while. Let him keep it to himself and shut up about it! Or else—let him speak in a way which no one can understand . . . don't let him interfere . . . don't let him stir up people without cause! It's none of his business how other people live! Let him follow his own righteous path . . . in the woods—or in a monastery—away from everybody! He mustn't interfere—nor condemn other people—but pray—pray for all of us—for all the world's sins—for mine—for yours—for everybody's. To pray—that's why he forsakes the world's turmoil! That's so! [Pause] But you—what sort of a pilgrim are you—? An

honest person must have a passport . . . all honest people have passports . . . yes! . . .

Luka. In this world there are people—and also just plain men . . .

Kostilyoff. Don't coin wise sayings! Don't give me riddles! I'm as clever as you . . . what's the difference—people and men?

Luka. What riddle is there? I say—there's sterile and there's fertile ground . . . whatever you sow in it, grows . . . that's all . . .

Kostilyoff. What do you mean?

Luka. Take yourself for instance . . . if the Lord God himself said to you: "Mik-hailo, be a man!"—it would be useless—nothing would come of it—you're doomed to remain just as you are . . .

Kostilyoff. Oh—but do you realize that my wife's uncle is a policeman, and that if I . . .

Vassilisa [coming in]. Mikhail Ivanitch—come and have your tea . . .

Kostilyoff [to LUKA]. You listen! Get out! You leave this place—hear?

Vassilisa. Yes—get out, old man! Your tongue's too long! And—who knows—you may be an escaped convict . . .

Kostilyoff. If I ever see sign of you again after to-day—well—I've warned you!

Luka. You'll call your uncle, eh? Go on—call him! Tell him you've caught an escaped convict—and maybe uncle'll get a reward—perhaps all of three kopecks . . .

Bubnoff [in the window]. What are you bargaining about? Three kopecks—for what?

Luka. They're threatening to sell me . . .

Vassilisa [to her husband]. Come . . .

Bubnoff. For three kopecks? Well—look out, old man—they may even do it for one!

Kostilyoff [to BUBNOFF]. You have a habit of jumping up like a jack-in-the-box!

Vassilisa. The world is full of shady people and crooks—

Luka. Hope you'll enjoy your tea!

Vassilisa [turning]. Shut up! You rotten toadstool! [Leaves with her husband]

Luka. I'm off to-night.

Bubnoff. That's right. Don't outstay your welcome!

Luka. True enough.

Bubnoff. I know. Perhaps I've escaped the gallows by getting away in time . . .

Luka. Well?

Bubnoff. That's true. It was this way.

My wife took up with my boss. He was great at his trade—could dye a dog's skin so that it looked like a raccoon's—could change cat's skin into kangaroo—muskrats, all sorts of things. Well—my wife took up with him—and they were so mad about each other that I got afraid they might poison me or something like that—so I commenced beating up my wife—and the boss beat me . . . we fought savagely! Once he tore off half my whiskers—and broke one of my ribs . . . well, then I, too, got enraged. . . . I cracked my wife over the head with an iron yard-measure—well—and altogether it was like an honest-to-God war! And then I saw that nothing really could come of it . . . they were planning to get the best of me! So I started planning—how to kill my wife—I thought of it a whole lot . . . but I thought better of it just in time . . . and got away . . .

Luka. That was best! Let them go on chasing dogs into raccoons!

Bubnoff. Only—the shop was in my wife's name . . . and so I did myself out of it, you see? Although, to tell the truth, I would have drunk it away . . . I'm a hard drinker, you know . . .

Luka. A hard drinker—oh . . .

Bubnoff. The worst you ever met! Once I start drinking, I drink everything in sight, I'll spend every bit of money I have—everything except my bones and my skin . . . what's more, I'm lazy . . . it's terrible how I hate work!

[*Enter SATINE and the ACTOR, quarrelling*]

Satine. Nonsense! You'll go nowhere—it's all a damned lie! Old man, what did you stuff him with all those fairy-tales for?

The Actor. You lie! Grandfather! Tell him that he lies!—I am going away. I worked to-day—I swept the streets . . . and I didn't have a drop of vodka. What do you think of that? Here they are—two fifteen-kopeck pieces—and I'm sober!

Satine. Why—that's absurd! Give it to me—I'll either drink it up—or lose it at cards . . .

The Actor. Get out—this is for my journey . . .

Luka [to *SATINE*]. And you—why are you trying to lead him astray?

Satine. Tell me, soothsayer, beloved by the gods, what's my future going to be? I've gone to pieces, brother—but everything

isn't lost yet, grandfather . . . there are sharks in this world who got more brains than I!

Luka. You're cheerful, Constantine—and very agreeable!

Bubnoff. Actor, come over here! [*The Actor crosses to window, sits down on the sill before BUBNOFF, and speaks in a low voice with him*]

Satine. You know brother, I used to be a clever youngster. It's nice to think of it. I was a devil of a fellow . . . danced splendidly, played on the stage, loved to amuse people . . . it was awfully gay . . .

Luka. How did you get to be what you are?

Satine. You're inquisitive, old man! You want to know everything? What for?

Luka. I want to understand the ways of men—I look at you, and I don't understand. You're a bold lad, Constantine, and you're no fool . . . yet, all of a sudden . . .

Satine. It's prison, grandfather—I spent four years and seven months in prison . . . afterwards—where could I go?

Luka. Aha! What were you there for?

Satine. On account of a scoundrel—whom I killed in a fit of rage . . . and despair . . . and in prison I learned to play cards. . . .

Luka. You killed—because of a woman?

Satine. Because of my own sister. . . . But look here—leave me alone! I don't care for these cross-examinations—and all this happened a long time ago. It's already nine years since my sister's death. . . . Brother, she was a wonderful girl . . .

Luka. You take life easily! And only a while ago that locksmith was here—and how he did yell!

Satine. Kleshtch?

Luka. Yes—"There's no work," he shouted; "there isn't anything . . ."

Satine. He'll get used to it. What could I do?

Luka [softly]. Look—here he comes!

[*KLESHTCH walks in slowly, his head bowed low*]

Satine. Hey, widower! Why are you so down in the mouth? What are you thinking?

Kleshtch. I'm thinking—what'll I do? I've no food—nothing—the funeral ate up all . . .

Satine. I'll give you a bit of advice . . . do nothing! Just be a burden to the world at large!

Kleshtch. Go on—talk—I'd be ashamed of myself . . .

Satine. Why—people aren't ashamed to let you live worse than a dog. Just think . . . you stop work—so do I—so do hundreds, thousands of others—everybody—understand?—everybody'll quit working . . . nobody'll do a damned thing—and then what'll happen?

Kleshtch. They'll all starve to death . . .

Luka [*to SATINE*]. If those are your notions, you ought to join the order of Béguines—you know—there's some such organization . . .

Satine. I know—grandfather—and they're no fools . . .

[*NASTASHA is heard screaming behind KOSTILYOFF'S window: "What for? Stop! What have I done?"*]

Luka [*worried*]. Natasha! That was she crying—oh, God . . .

[*From KOSTILYOFF'S room is heard noise, shuffling, breaking of crockery, and KOSTILYOFF'S shrill cry: "Ah! Heretic! Bitch!"*]

Vassilisa. Wait, wait—I'll teach her—there, there!

Natasha. They're beating me—killing me . . .

Satine [*shouts through the window*]. Hey—you there—

Luka [*trembling*]. Where's Vassily?—? Call Vaska—oh, God—listen, brothers . . .

The Actor [*running out*]. I'll find him at once!

Bubnoff. They beat her a lot these days . . .

Satine. Come on, old man—we'll be witnesses . . .

Luka [*following SATINE*]. Oh—witnesses—what for? Vassily—he should be called at once!

Natasha. Sister—sister dear! Va-a-a . . .

Bubnoff. They've gagged her—I'll go and see . . .

[*The noise in KOSTILYOFF'S room dies down gradually as if they had gone into the hallway. The old man's cry: "Stop!" is heard. A door is slammed noisily, and the latter sound cuts off all the other noises sharply. Quiet on the stage. Twilight*]

Kleshtch [*seated on the sledge, indifferently, rubbing his hands; mutters at first indistinguishably, then*]. What then? One

must live. [*Louder*] Must have shelter—well? There's no shelter, no roof—nothing . . . there's only man—man alone—no hope . . . no help . . .

[*Exit slowly, his head bent. A few moments of ominous silence, then somewhere in the hallway a mass of sounds, which grows in volume and comes nearer. Individual voices are heard*]

Vassilisa. I'm her sister—let go . . .

Kostilyoff. What right have you . . . ?

Vassilisa. Jail-bird!

Satine. Call Vaska—quickly! Zob—hit him!

[*A police whistle. The TARTAR runs in, his right hand in a sling*]

The Tartar. There's a new law for you—kill only in daytime!

[*Enter Zob, followed by MIEDVIEDIEFF*]

Zob. I handed him a good one!

Miedviedieff. You—how dare you fight?

The Tartar. What about yourself?

What's your duty?

Miedviedieff [*running after*]. Stop—give back my whistle!

Kostilyoff [*runs in*]. Abram! Stop him! Hold him! He's a murderer—he . . .

[*Enter KVASHNYA and NASTYA supporting NATASHA who is disheveled. SATINE backs away, pushing away VASSILISA who is trying to attack her sister, while, near her, ALYOSHA jumps up and down like a madman, whistles into her ear, shrieking, roaring. Also other ragged men and women*]

Satine [*to VASSILISA*]. Well—you damned bitch!

Vassilisa. Let go, you jail-bird! I'll tear you to pieces—if I have to pay for it with my own life!

Kvashnya [*leading NATASHA aside*]. You Karpovna—that's enough—stand back—aren't you ashamed? Or are you crazy?

Miedviedieff [*seizes SATINE*]. Aha—caught at last!

Satine. Zob—beat them up! Vaska—Vaska . . .

[*They all, in a chaotic mass, struggle near the brick wall. They lead NATASHA to the right, and set her on a pile of wood. PEPSEL rushes in from the hallway and, silently, with powerful movements, pushes the crowd aside*]

Pepel. Natalia, where are you . . . you . . .

Kostilyoff [disappearing behind a corner]. Abram! Seize Vaska! Comrades—help us get him! The thief! The robber!

Pepel. You—you old bastard! [*Aiming a terrific blow at KOSTILYOFF. KOSTILYOFF falls so that only the upper part of his body is seen. PEPEL rushes to NATASHA*]

Vassilisa. Beat Vaska! Brothers! Beat the thief!

Miedviedieff [yells to SATINE]. Keep out of this—it's a family affair . . . they're relatives—and who are you? . . .

Pepel [to NATASHA]. What did she do to you? She used a knife?

Kvashnya. God—what beasts! They've scalded the child's feet with boiling water!

Nasty. They overturned the samovar . . .

The Tartar. Maybe an accident—you must make sure—you can't exactly tell . . .

Natasha [half fainting]. Vassily—take me away—

Vassilisa. Good people! Come! Look! He's dead! Murdered!

[*All crowd into the hallway near KOSTILYOFF. BUBNOFF leaves the crowd and crosses to PEPEL*]

Bubnoff [in a low voice, to PEPEL]. Vaska—the old man is done for!

Pepel [looks at him, as though he does not understand]. Go—for help—she must be taken to the hospital . . . I'll settle with them . . .

Bubnoff. I say—the old man—somebody's killed him . . .

[*The noise on the stage dies out like a fire under water. Distinct, whispered exclamations: "Not really?" "Well—let's go away, brothers!" "The devil!" "Hold on now!" "Let's get away before the police come!" The crowd disappears. BUBNOFF, the TARTAR, NASTYA, and KVASHENYA, rush up to KOSTILYOFF's body*]

Vassilisa [rises and cries out triumphantly]. Killed—my husband's killed! Vaska killed him! I saw him! Brothers, I saw him! Well—Vasya—the police!

Pepel [moves away from NATASHA]. Let me alone. [*Looks at KOSTILYOFF; to VASSILISA*] Well—are you glad? [*Touches the corpse with his foot*] The old bastard is dead! Your wish has been granted! Why not do the same to you? [*Throws himself at her*]

[*SATINE and ZOB quickly overpower him, and VASSILISA disappears in the passage*]

Satine. Come to your senses!

Zob. Hold on! Not so fast!

Vassilisa [appearing]. Well, Vaska, dear friend? You can't escape your fate. . . . police—Abram—whistle!

Miedviedieff. Those devils tore my whistle off!

Alyoshka. Here it is! [*Whistles, MIEDVIEDIEFF runs after him*]

Satine [leading PEPEL to NATASHA]. Don't be afraid, Vaska! Killed in a row! That's nonsense—only manslaughter—you won't have to serve a long term . . .

Vassilisa. Hold Vaska—he killed him—I saw it!

Satine. I, too, gave the old man a couple of blows—he was easily fixed . . . you call me as witness, Vaska!

Pepel. I don't need to defend myself . . . I want to drag Vassilisa into this mess—and I'll do it—she was the one who wanted it . . . she was the one who urged me to kill him—she goaded me on . . .

Natasha [sudden and loud]. Oh—I understand—so that's it, Vassily? Good people! They're both guilty—my sister and he—they're both guilty! They had it all planned! So, Vassily, that's why you spoke to me a while ago—so that she should overhear everything—? Good people! She's his mistress—you know it—everybody knows it—they're both guilty! She—she urged him to kill her husband—he was in their way—and so was I! And now they've maimed me . . .

Pepel. Natalia! What's the matter with you? What are you saying?

Satine. Oh—hell!

Vassilisa. You lie. She lies. He—Vaska killed him . . .

Natasha. They're both guilty! God damn you both!

Satine. What a mix-up! Hold on, Vassily—or they'll ruin you between them!

Zob. I can't understand it—oh—what a mess!

Pepel. Natalia! It can't be true! Surely you don't believe that I—with her—

Satine. So help me God, Natasha! Just think . . .

Vassilisa [in the passage]. They've killed my husband—Your Excellency! Vaska

Pepel, the thief, killed him, Captain! I saw it—everybody saw it . . .

Natasha [tossing about in agony; her mind wandering]. Good people—my sister and Vaska killed him! The police—listen—this sister of mine—here—she urged, coaxed her lover—there he stands—the scoundrel! They both killed him! Put them in jail! Bring them before the judge! Take me along, too! To prison! Christ Almighty—take me to prison, too!

ACT FOUR

Same as Act One. But PEPEL's room is no longer there, and the partition has been removed. Furthermore, there is no anvil at the place where KLESHTCH used to sit and work. In the corner, where PEPEL's room used to be, the TARTAR lies stretched out, rather restless, and groaning from time to time. KLESHTCH sits at one end of the table, repairing a concertina and now and then testing the stops. At the other end of the table sit SATINE, the BARON, and NASTYA. In front of them stand a bottle of vodka, three bottles of beer, and a large loaf of black bread. The ACTOR lies on top of the stove, shifting about and coughing. It is night. The stage is lit by a lamp in the middle of the table. Outside the wind howls.

Kleshtch. Yes . . . he disappeared during the confusion and noise . . .

The Baron. He vanished under the very eyes of the police—just like a puff of smoke . . .

Satine. That's how sinners flee from the company of the righteous!

Nastya. He was a dear old soul! But you—you aren't men—you're just—oh—like rust on iron!

The Baron [drinks]. Here's to you, my lady!

Satine. He was an inquisitive old fellow—yes! Nastenka here fell in love with him . . .

Nastya. Yes! I did! Madly! It's true! He saw everything—understood everything . . .

Satine [laughing]. Yes, generally speaking, I would say that he was—oh—like mush to those who can't chew. . . .

The Baron [laughing]. Right! Like plaster on a boil!

Kleshtch. He was merciful—you people don't know what pity means . . .

Satine. What good can I do you by pitying you?

Kleshtch. You needn't have pity—but you needn't harm or offend your fellow-beings, either!

The Tartar [sits up on his bunk, nursing his wounded hand carefully]. He was a fine old man. The law of life was the law of his heart . . . and he who obeys this law, is good, while he who disregards it, perishes . . .

The Baron. What law, Prince?

The Tartar. There are a number—different ones—you know . . .

The Baron. Proceed!

The Tartar. Do not do harm unto others—such is the law!

Satine. Oh—you mean the Penal Code, criminal and correctional, eh?

The Baron. And also the Code of Penalties inflicted by Justices of the Peace!

The Tartar. No. I mean the Koran. It is the supreme law—and your own soul ought to be the Koran—yes!

Kleshtch [testing his concertina]. It wheezes like all hell! But the Prince speaks the truth—one must live abiding by the law—by the teachings of the Gospels . . .

Satine. Well—go ahead and do it!

The Baron. Just try it!

The Tartar. The Prophet Mohammed gave to us the law. He said: "Here is the law! Do as it is written therein!" Later on a time will arrive when the Koran will have outlived its purpose—and time will bring forth its own laws—every generation will create its own . . .

Satine. To be sure! Time passed on—and gave us—the Criminal Code . . . It's a strong law, brother—it won't wear off so very soon!

Nastya [banging her glass on the table]. Why—why do I stay here—with you? I'll go away somewhere—to the ends of the world!

The Baron. Without any shoes, my lady?

Nastya. I'll go—naked, if must be—creeping on all fours!

The Baron. That'll be rather picturesque, my lady—on all fours!

Nastya. Yes—and I'll crawl if I have to—anything at all—as long as I don't have to see your faces any longer—oh, I'm so

sick of it all—the life—the people—everything!

Satine. When you go, please take the actor along—he's preparing to go to the very same place—he has learned that within a half mile's distance of the end of the world there's a hospital for diseased organons . . .

The Actor [*raising his head over the top of the stove*]. A hospital for organisms—you fool!

Satine. For organons—poisoned with vodka!

The Actor. Yes! He will go! He will indeed! You'll see!

The Baron. Who is he, sir?

The Actor. I!

The Baron. Thanks, servant of the goddess—what's her name—? The goddess of drama—tragedy—whatever is her name—?

The Actor. The muse, idiot! Not the goddess—the muse!

Satine. Lachesis—Hera—Aphrodite—Atropos—oh! To hell with them all! You see—Baron—it was the old man who stuffed the actor's head full with this rot . . .

The Baron. That old man's a fool . . .

The Actor. Ignoramuses! Beasts! Melpomene—that's her name! Heartless brutes! Bastards! You'll see! He'll go! "On with the orgy, dismal spirits!"—poem—ah—by Béranger! Yes—he'll find some spot where there's no—no . . .

The Baron. Where there's nothing, sir?

The Actor. Right! Nothing! "This hole shall be my grave—I am dying—ill and exhausted . . ." Why do you exist? Why?

The Baron. You! God or genius or orgy—or whatever you are—don't roar so loud!

The Actor. You lie! I'll roar all I want to!

Nastya [*lifting her head from the table and throwing up her hands*]. Go on! Yell! Let them listen to you!

The Baron. Where is the sense, my lady?

Satine. Leave them alone, Baron! To hell with the lot! Let them yell—let them knock their damned heads off if they feel like it! There's a method in their madness! Don't you go and interfere with people as that old fellow did! Yes—it's he—the damned old fool—he bewitched the whole gang of us!

Kleshtch. He persuaded them to go away—but failed to show them the road . . .

The Baron. That old man was a humbug!

Nastya. Liar! You're a humbug yourself!

The Baron. Shut up, my lady!

Kleshtch. The old man didn't like truth very much—as a matter of fact he strongly resented it—and wasn't he right, though? Just look—where is there any truth? And yet, without it, you can't breathe! For instance, our Tartar Prince over there, crushed his hand at his work—and now he'll have to have his arm amputated—and there's the truth for you!

Satine [*striking the table with his clenched fist*]. Shut up! You sons of bitches! Fools! Not another word about that old fellow! [*To the BARON*] You, Baron, are the worst of the lot! You don't understand a thing, and you lie like the devil! The old man's no humbug! What's the truth? Man! Man—that's the truth! He understood man—you don't! You're all as dumb as stones! I understand the old man—yes! He lied—but lied out of sheer pity for you . . . God damn you! Lots of people lie out of pity for their fellow-beings! I know! I've read about it! They lie—oh—beautifully, inspiringly, stirringly! Some lies bring comfort, and others bring peace—a lie alone can justify the burden which crushed a workman's hand and condemns those who are starving! I know what lying means! The weakling and the one who is a parasite through his very weakness—they both need lies—lies are their support, their shield, their armor! But the man who is strong, who is his own master, who is free and does not have to suck his neighbors' blood—he needs no lies! To lie—it's the creed of slaves and masters of slaves! Truth is the religion of the free man!

The Baron. Bravo! Well spoken! Hear, hear! I agree! You speak like an honest man!

Satine. And why can't a crook at times speak the truth—since honest people at times speak like crooks? Yes—I've forgotten a lot—but I still know a thing or two! The old man? Oh—he's wise! He affected me as acid affects a dirty old silver coin! Let's drink to his health! Fill the glasses . . . [*NASTYA fills a glass with beer and hands it to SATINE, who laughs*] The old man lives within himself . . . he looks upon all the world from his own angle. Once I asked him: "Grand-dad, why do people

live?" [*Tries to imitate LUKA's voice and gestures*] And he replied: "Why, my dear fellow, people live in the hope of something better! For example—let's say there are carpenters in this world, and all sorts of trash . . . people . . . and they give birth to a carpenter the like of which has never been seen upon the face of the earth . . . he's way above everybody else, and has no equal among carpenters! The brilliancy of his personality was reflected on all his trade, on all the other carpenters, so that they advanced twenty years in one day! This applies to all other trades—blacksmiths and shoemakers and other workmen—and all the peasants—and even the aristocrats live in the hopes of a higher life! Each individual thinks that he's living for his own self, but in reality he lives in the hope of something better. A hundred years—sometimes longer—do we expect, live for the finer, higher life . . ." [*NASTYA stares intently into SATINE's face. KLESHTCH stops working and listens. The BARON bows his head very low, drumming softly on the table with his fingers. The ACTOR, peering down from the stove, tries to climb noiselessly into the bunk*] "Every one, brothers, every one lives in the hope of something better. That's why we must respect each and every human being! How do we know who he is, why he was born, and what he is capable of accomplishing? Perhaps his coming into the world will prove to be our good fortune . . . Especially must we respect little children! Children—need freedom! Don't interfere with their lives! Respect children!"

[*Pause*]

The Baron [*thoughtfully*]. Hm—yes—something better?—That reminds me of my family . . . an old family dating back to the time of Catherine . . . all noblemen, soldiers, originally French—they served their country and gradually rose higher and higher. In the days of Nicholas the First my grandfather, Gustave DeBille, held a high post—riches—hundreds of serfs . . . horses—cooks—

Nastya. You liar! It isn't true!

The Baron [*jumping up*]. What? Well—go on—

Nastya. It isn't true.

The Baron [*screams*]. A house in Moscow! A house in Petersburg! Carriages! Carriages with coats of arms!

[*KLESHTCH takes his concertina and goes to one side, watching the scene with interest*]

Nastya. You lie!

The Baron. Shut up!—I say—dozens of footmen . . .

Nastya [*delighted*]. You lie!

The Baron. I'll kill you!

Nastya [*ready to run away*]. There were no carriages!

Satine. Stop, Nastenka! Don't infuriate him!

The Baron. Wait—you bitch! My grandfather . . .

Nastya. There was no grandfather! There was nothing!

[*SATINE roars with laughter*]

The Baron [*worn out with rage, sits down on bench*]. Satine! Tell that slut—what? You, too, are laughing? You—don't believe me either? [*Cries out in despair, pounding the table with his fists*] It's true—damn the whole lot of you!

Nastya [*triumphantly*]. So—you're crying? Understand now what a human being feels like when nobody believes him?

Kleshtch [*returning to the table*]. I thought there'd be a fight . . .

The Tartar. Oh—people are fools! It's too bad . . .

The Baron. I shall not permit any one to ridicule me! I have proofs—documents—damn you!

Satine. Forget it! Forget about your grandfather's carriages! You can't drive anywhere in a carriage of the past!

The Baron. How dare she—just the same—?

Nastya. Just imagine! How dare I—?

Satine. You see—she does dare! How is she any worse than you are? Although, surely, in her past there wasn't even a father and mother, let alone carriages and a grandfather . . .

The Baron [*quieting down*]. Devil take you—you do know how to argue dispassionately—and I, it seems—I've no will-power . . .

Satine. Acquire some—it's useful . . .

[*Pause*] Nastya! Are you going to the hospital?

Nastya. What for?

Satine. To see Natasha.

Nastya. Oh—just woke up, did you? She's been out of the hospital for some time—and they can't find a trace of her . . .

Satine. Oh—that woman's a goner!

Kleshtch. It's interesting to see whether Vaska will get the best of Vassilisa, or the other way around—?

Nastya. Vassilisa will win out! She's shrewd! And Vaska will go to the gallows!

Satine. For manslaughter? No—only to jail . . .

Nastya. Too bad—the gallows would have been better . . . that's where all of you should be sent . . . swept off into a hole—like filth . . .

Satine [astonished]. What's the matter? Are you crazy?

The Baron. Oh—give her a wallop—that'll teach her to be less impertinent . . .

Nastya. Just you try to touch me!

The Baron. I shall!

Satine. Stop! Don't insult her! I can't get the thought of the old man out of my head! [Roars with laughter] Don't offend your fellow-beings! Suppose I were offended once in such a way that I'd remember it for the rest of my life? What then? Should I forgive? No, no!

The Baron [to *NASTYA*]. You must understand that I'm not your sort . . . you—ah—you piece of dirt!

Nastya. You bastard! Why—you live off me like a worm off an apple!

[The men laugh amusedly]

Kleshtch. Fool! An apple—?

The Baron. You can't be angry with her—she's just an ass—

Nastya. You laugh! Liars? Don't strike you as funny, eh?

The Actor [morosely]. Give them a good beating!

Nastya. If I only could! [Takes a cup from the table and throws it on the floor] That's what I'd like to do to you all!

The Tartar. Why break dishes—eh—silly girl?

The Baron [rising]. That'll do! I'll teach her manners in half a second!

Nastya [running toward door]. Go to hell!

Satine [calling after her]. Hey! That's enough! Whom are you trying to frighten? What's all the row about, anyway?

Nastya. Dogs! I hope you'll croak! Dogs! [Runs out]

The Actor [morosely]. Amen!

The Tartar. Allah! Mad women, these Russians! They're bold, wilful; Tartar

women aren't like that! They know the law and abide by it. . . .

Kleshtch. She ought to be given a sound hiding!

The Baron. The slut!

Kleshtch [testing the concertina]. It's ready! But its owner isn't here yet—that young fellow is burning his life away . . .

Satine. Care for a drink—now?

Kleshtch. Thanks . . . it's time to go to bed . . .

Satine. Getting used to us?

Kleshtch [drinks, then goes to his bunk]. It's all right . . . there are people everywhere—at first you don't notice it . . . but after a while you don't mind. . . .

[The TARTAR spreads some rags over his bunk, then kneels on them and prays]

The Baron [to *SATINE*, pointing at the TARTAR]. Look!

Satine. Stop! He's a good fellow! Leave him alone! [Roars with laughter] I feel kindly to-day—the devil alone knows the reason why . . .

The Baron. You always feel kindly when you're drunk—you're even wiser at such times . . .

Satine. When I'm drunk? Yes—then I like everything—right—He prays? That's fine! A man may believe or not—that's his own affair—a man is free—he pays for everything himself—belief or unbelief—love—wisdom . . . a man pays for everything—and that's just why he's free! Man is truth! And what is man? It's neither you nor I nor they—oh, no—it's you and they and I and the old man—and Napoleon—Mohammed—all in one! [Outlines vaguely in the air the contour of a human being] Do you understand? It's tremendous! It contains the beginning and the end of everything—everything is in man—and everything exists for him! Man alone exists—everything else is the creation of his hands and his brain! Man! It is glorious! It sounds—oh—so big! Man must be respected—not degraded with pity—but respected, respected! Let us drink to man, Baron! [Rises] It is good to feel that you are a man! I'm a convict, a murderer, a crook—granted!—When I'm out on the street people stare at me as if I were a scoundrel—they draw away from me—they look after me and often they say: "You dog! You humbug! Work!" Work? And what for? to fill my belly? [Roars with

laughter] I've always despised people who worry too much about their bellies. It isn't right, Baron! It isn't! Man is loftier than that! Man stands above hunger!

The Baron. You—reason things out. . . . Well and good—it brings you a certain amount of consolation. . . . Personally I'm incapable of it . . . I don't know how. [*Glances around him and then, softly, guardedly*] Brother—I am afraid—at times. Do you understand? Afraid!—Because—what next?

Satine. Rot! What's a man to be afraid of?

The Baron [*pacing up and down*]. You know—as far back as I can remember, there's been a sort of fog in my brain. I was never able to understand anything. Somehow I feel embarrassed—it seems to me that all my life I've done nothing but change clothes—and why? I don't understand! I studied—I wore the uniform of the Institute for the Sons of the Nobility . . . but what have I learned? I don't remember! I married—I wore a frock-coat—then a dressing-gown . . . but I chose a disagreeable wife . . . and why? I don't understand. I squandered everything that I possessed—I wore some sort of a grey jacket and brick-colored trousers—but how did I happen to ruin myself? I haven't the slightest idea. . . . I had a position in the Department of State. . . . I wore a uniform and a cap with insignia of rank. . . . I embezzled government funds . . . so they dressed me in a convict's garb—and later on I got into these clothes here—and it all happened as in a dream—it's funny . . .

Satine. Not very! It's rather—silly!

The Baron. Yes—silly! I think so, too. Still—wasn't I born for some sort of purpose?

Satine [*laughing*]. Probably—a man is born to conceive a better man. [*Shaking his head*]—It's all right!

The Baron. That she-devil Nastya! Where did she run to? I'll go and see—after all, she . . . [*Exit; pause*]

The Actor. Tartar! [*Pause*] Prince! [*The TARTAR looks round*] Say a prayer for me . . .

The Tartar. What?

The Actor [*softly*]. Pray—for me!

The Tartar [*after a silence*]. Pray for your own self!

The Actor [*quickly crawls off the stove*

and goes to the table, pours out a drink with shaking hands, drinks, then almost runs to passage]. All over!

Satine. Hey, proud Sicambrian! Where are you going?

[*SATINE whistles. MIEDVIEDIEFF enters, dressed in a woman's flannel shirtwaist; followed by BUBNOFF. Both are slightly drunk. BUBNOFF carries a bunch of pretzels in one hand, a couple of smoked fish in the other, a bottle of vodka under one arm, another bottle in his coat pocket*]

Miedviedieff. A camel is something like a donkey—only it has no ears. . . .

Bubnoff. Shut up! You're a variety of donkey yourself!

Miedviedieff. A camel has no ears at all, at all—it hears through its nostrils . . .

Bubnoff [*to SATINE*]. Friend! I've looked for you in all the saloons and all the cabarets! Take this bottle—my hands are full . . .

Satine. Put the pretzels on the table—then you'll have one hand free—

Bubnoff. Right! Hey—you donkey—look! Isn't he a clever fellow?

Miedviedieff. All crooks are clever—I know! They couldn't do a thing without brains. An honest man is all right even if he's an idiot . . . but a crook must have brains. But, speaking about camels, you're wrong . . . you can ride them—they have no horns . . . and no teeth either . . .

Bubnoff. Where's everybody? Why is there no one here? Come on out . . . I treat! Who's in the corner?

Satine. How soon will you drink up everything you have? Scarecrow!

Bubnoff. Very soon! I've very little this time. Zob—where's Zob?

Kleshtch [*crossing to table*]. He isn't here . . .

Bubnoff. Waughrr! Bull-dog! Brrzz-zz!—Turkey-cock! Don't bark and don't growl! Drink—make merry—and don't be sullen!—I treat everybody—Brother, I love to treat—if I were rich, I'd run a free saloon! So help me God, I would! With an orchestra and a lot of singers! Come, every one! Drink and eat—listen to the music—and rest in peace! Beggars—come, all you beggars—and enter my saloon free of charge! *Satine*—you can have half my capital—just like that!

Satine. You better give me all you have straight away!

Bubnoff. All my capital? Right now? Well—here's a ruble—here's twenty kopecks—five kopecks—sun-flower seeds—and that's all!

Satine. That's spendid! It'll be safer with me—I'll gamble with it . . .

Miedviedieff. I'm a witness—the money was given you for safe-keeping. How much is it?

Bubnoff. You? You're a camel—we don't need witnesses . . .

Alyoshka [*comes in barefoot*]. Brothers, I got my feet wet!

Bubnoff. Go on and get your throat wet—and nothing'll happen—you're a fine fellow—you sing and you play—that's all right! But it's too bad you drink—drink, little brother, is harmful, very harmful . . .

Alyoshka. I judge by you! Only when you're drunk do you resemble a human being . . . Kleshtch! Is my concertina fixed? [*Sings and dances*]

"If my mug were not so attractive,

My sweetheart wouldn't love me at all . . ."

Boys, I'm frozen—it's cold . . .

Miedviedieff. Hm—and may I ask who's this sweetheart?

Bubnoff. Shut up! From now on, brother, you are neither a policeman nor an uncle!

Alyoshka. Just auntie's husband!

Bubnoff. One of your nieces is in jail—the other one's dying . . .

Miedviedieff [*proudly*]. You lie! She's not dying—she disappeared—without trace . . . [*SATINE roars*]

Bubnoff. All the same, brothers—a man without nieces isn't an uncle!

Alyoshka. Your Excellency! Listen to the drummer of the retired billygoats' brigade! [*Sings*]

"My sweetheart has money,

I haven't a cent.

But I'm a cheerful,

Merry lad!"

Oh—isn't it cold!

[*Enter ZOB. From now until the final curtain men and women drift in, undress, and stretch out on the bunks, grumbling*]

Zob. Bubnoff! Why did you run off?

Bubnoff. Come here—sit down—brother, let's sing my favorite ditty, eh?

The Tartar. Night was made for sleep! Sing your songs in the daytime!

Satine. Well—never mind, Prince—come here!

The Tartar. What do you mean—never mind? There's going to be a noise—there always is when people sing!

Bubnoff [*crossing to the TARTAR*]. Count—ah—I mean Prince—how's your hand? Did they cut it off?

The Tartar. What for? We'll wait and see—perhaps it won't be necessary . . . a hand isn't made of iron—it won't take long to cut it off . . .

Zob. It's your own affair, Hassanka! You'll be good for nothing without your hand. We're judged by our hands and backs—without the pride of your hand, you're no longer a human being. Tobacco-carting—that's your business! Come on—have a drink of vodka—and stop worrying!

Kvashnya [*comes in*]. Ah, my beloved fellow-lodgers! It's horrible outside—snow and slush . . . is my policeman here?

Miedviedieff. Right here!

Kvashnya. Wearing my blouse again? And drunk, eh? What's the idea?

Miedviedieff. In celebration of Bubnoff's birthday . . . besides, it's cold . . .

Kvashnya. Better look out—stop fooling about and go to sleep!

Miedviedieff [*goes to kitchen*]. Sleep? I can—I want to—it's time— [*Exit*]

Satine. What's the matter? Why are you so strict with him?

Kvashnya. You can't be otherwise, friend. You have to be strict with his sort. I took him as a partner. I thought he'd be of some benefit to me—because he's a military man—and you're a rough lot . . . and I am a woman—and now he's turned drunkard—that won't do at all!

Satine. You picked a good one for partner!

Kvashnya. Couldn't get a better one. You wouldn't want to live with me . . . you think you're too fine! And even if you did it wouldn't last more than a week . . . you'd gamble me and all I own away at cards!

Satine [*roars with laughter*]. That's true, landlady—I'd gamble . . .

Kvashnya. Yes, yes. Alyoshka!

Alyoshka. Here he is—I, myself!

Kvashnya. What do you mean by gossiping about me?

Alyoshka. I? I speak out everything—whatever my conscience tells me. There, I say, is a wonderful woman! Splendid meat, fat, bones—over four hundred pounds! But brains—? Not an ounce!

Kvashnya. You're a liar! I've a lot of brains! What do you mean by saying I beat my policeman?

Alyoshka. I thought you did—when you pulled him by the hair!

Kvashnya [laughs]. You fool! You aren't blind, are you? Why wash dirty linen in public? And—it hurts his feelings—that's why he took to drink . . .

Alyoshka. It's true, evidently, that even a chicken likes vodka . . . [*SATINE and KLESHTCH roar with laughter*]

Kvashnya. Go on—show your teeth! What sort of a man are you anyway, Alyoshka?

Alyoshka. Oh—I am first-rate! Master of all trades! I follow my nose!

Bubnoff [near the TARTAR's bunk]. Come on! At all events—we won't let you sleep! We'll sing all night. Zob!

Zob. Sing—? All right . . .

Alyoshka. And I'll play . . .

Satine. We'll listen!

The Tartar [smiling]. Well—Bubnoff—you devil—bring the vodka—we'll drink—we'll have a hell of a good time! The end will come soon enough—and then we'll be dead!

Bubnoff. Fill his glass, Satine! Zob—sit down! Ah—brothers—what does a man need after all? There, for instance, I've had a drink—and I'm happy! Zob! Start my favorite song! I'll sing—and then I'll cry. . . .

Zob [begins to sing].

"The sun rises and sets . . ."

Bubnoff [joining in].

"But my prison is all dark . . ."

[*Door opens quickly*]

The Baron [on the threshold; yells]. Hey—you—come—come here! Out in the waste—in the yard . . . over there . . . The actor—he's hanged himself. . . .

[*Silence. All stare at the BARON. Behind him appears NASTYA, and slowly, her eyes wide with horror, she walks to the table*]

Satine [in a matter-of-fact voice]. Damned fool—he ruined the song . . . !

THE END

THE CHERRY ORCHARD

(VISCHEVEE SAD)

By ANTON TCHEKHOV

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ANTON TCHEKHOV AND HIS PLAYS

ANTON TCHEKHOV, the author of *The Cherry Orchard*, was born in 1860 in Taganrog, in the south of Russia, studied at the University of Moscow, and in 1884 gained the degree of M.D. Early in his career he turned to writing, and gained fame as the greatest master of the short-story that Russia has produced. In 1885 he began to write plays, with varying success. After the failure of his *Sea Gull* in St. Petersburg, the Moscow Art Theatre took over the play and presented it successfully, and then began Tchekhov's association with that famous organization. The two became so intimately connected that it is commonly supposed that each "made" the other. The truth is that, although the Moscow Art Theatre made the first productions of Tchekhov's *Three Sisters* and *The Cherry Orchard*, both the dramatist and the theatre were celebrated and well-established before they came together at all. Toward the close of his life Tchekhov became an actual shareholder in the company, and married Olga Kneipper, one of the actresses. Tchekhov suffered from tuberculosis, and spent his last years in the mild climate of the Crimea, where he died in 1904.

Tchekhov wrote altogether fourteen plays, nine of which are of one act only. Of his five long plays the indubitable masterpieces are *The Three Sisters*, *The Sea Gull*, and *The Cherry Orchard*. In technique he is primarily a naturalist, but he informs his naturalism with a delicate and unobtrusive symbolism. With Tchekhov the symbol is not an external ornament, deliberately applied from the outside, but an essential ingredient, a natural growth out of action, character, and environment. It is completely fused with these other elements, yet it dominates and transcends them. It is at the same time both an interpretation of the fact and the fact itself. Like Schnitzler, also a physician, Tchekhov carries into his plays something of the psychological insight acquired in his practice; to this fact he himself testifies. And, again like Schnitzler, he shows a tolerant sympathy for all kinds of men and all their vagaries. He seems less interested in isolated individuals than in individuals closely associated in a group. This group is composed, not of the proletariat, as is usual in the naturalistic plays of Hauptmann, but of the *bourgeoisie* or of the gentry of the country or the towns. And the group, however composed, becomes, by some astonishing skill, possessed of such organic unity that the whole seems like a many-sided individual.

At first Tchekhov's plays look almost formless and incoherent; but actually they are of a strong fabric, closely and artfully woven, with every effect carefully planned, and with every line of the apparently artless speech contributing to the total impression. Here is, indeed, the art that conceals art and surpasses art—"the art itself is nature." The final result is a sense of reality attained in like measure by scarcely another modern dramatist.

The Cherry Orchard is characteristic of Tchekhov's work in general. It pictures a complete group, this time composed of persons of various types and social ranks, every member of which is as carefully characterized as if he were the sole protagonist of the play, and all disposed in the picture according to the way and the degree in which he expresses the dominant idea. Simply as an illustration of the relation of social classes in Russia the play is undoubtedly out of date; it relies for its appeal upon its humanity. Peculiarly Russian, its persons are so free from inhibitions, so naïve, as often to seem incredibly childlike to western eyes; but those of their traits that seem distinctively national are so utterly merged in universal qualities that they become generally comprehensible.

The Cherry Orchard was written in 1904 and in that same year was presented by the Moscow Art Theatre. Its first performance in English was in 1911, in London, by the Stage Society. The Moscow Art Theatre included it in their repertory on their first American tour, which opened in New York in December, 1923. Since then it has been repeatedly performed in English in the United States.

CHARACTERS

MADAME RANÉVSKY, *a landowner*
ÁNYA, *her daughter, aged seventeen*
BARBARA, *her adopted daughter, aged twenty-seven*
LEONÍD GÁYEF, *brother of Madame Ranévsky*
LOPÁKHIN, *a merchant*
PETER TROPHÍMOF, *a student*
SIMEÓNOF-PÍSHTCHIK, *a landowner*
CHARLOTTE, *a governess*
EPHIKHÓDOF, *a clerk*
DUNYÁSHA, *a housemaid*
FIRS, *man-servant, aged eighty-seven*
YÁSHA, *a young man-servant*
TRAMP
Stationmaster, Post-Office Official, Guests, Servants, etc.

The action takes place on Madame Ranévsky's estate in Russia about the year 1900.

THE CHERRY ORCHARD

ACT ONE

A room which is still called the nursery. One door leads to ANYA'S room. Dawn; the sun will soon rise. It is already May; the cherry trees are in blossom, but it is cold in the garden and there is a morning frost. The windows are closed.

Enter DUNYASHA with a candle, and LOPÁKHIN with a book in his hand.

Lopákhin. So the train has come in, thank Heaven. What is the time?

Dunyásha. Nearly two. [*Putting the candle out.*] It is light already.

Lopákhin. How late is the train? A couple of hours at least. [*Yawning and stretching.*] What do you think of me? A fine fool I have made of myself. I came on purpose to meet them at the station and then I went and fell asleep, fell asleep as I sat in my chair. What a nuisance it is! You might have woke me up anyway.

Dunyásha. I thought that you had gone. [*She listens.*] That sounds like them driving up.

Lopákhin [*listening*]. No; they have got to get the luggage out and all that. [*A pause.*] Madame Ranévsky has been five years abroad. I wonder what she has become like. What a splendid creature she is! So easy and simple in her ways. I remember when I was a youngster of fifteen my old father (he used to keep the shop here in the village then) struck me in the face with his fist and set my nose bleeding. We had come, for some reason or other, I forget what, into the courtyard, and he had been drinking. Madame Ranévsky—I remember it like yesterday, still a young girl, and oh, so slender—brought me to the washhand stand, here, in this very room, in the nursery. "Don't cry, little peasant," she said, "it'll mend by your wedding."¹ [*A pause.*] "Little peasant"! . . . My father, it is true, was a peasant, and here am I in a white waistcoat and brown boots; a silk purse out of

¹ *It'll mend by your wedding:* a proverbial phrase.

a sow's ear, as you might say; just turned rich, with heaps of money, but when you come to look at it, still a peasant of the peasants. [*Turning over the pages of the book.*] Here's this book that I was reading and didn't understand a word of it; I just sat reading and fell asleep.

Dunyásha. The dogs never slept all night; they knew that their master and mistress were coming.

Lopákhin. What's the matter with you, Dunyásha? You're all . . .

Dunyásha. My hands are trembling; I feel quite faint.

Lopákhin. You are too refined, Dunyásha; that's what it is. You dress yourself like a young lady; and look at your hair! You ought not to do it; you ought to remember your place.

[*Enter EPHIKHÓDOF with a nosegay. He is dressed in a short jacket and brightly polished boots which squeak noisily. As he comes in he drops the nosegay.*]

Ephikhódof [*picking it up*]. The gardener has sent this; he says it is to go in the dining-room. [*Handing it to DUNYASHA.*]

Lopákhin. And bring me some quass.

Dunyásha. Yes, sir. [*Exit DUNYASHA.*]

Ephikhódof. There's a frost this morning, three degrees, and the cherry trees all in blossom. I can't say I think much of our climate; [*sighing*] that is impossible. Our climate is not adapted to contribute; and I should like to add, with your permission, that only two days ago I bought myself a new pair of boots, and I venture to assure you they do squeak beyond all bearing. What am I to grease them with?

Lopákhin. Get out; I'm tired of you.

Ephikhódof. Every day some misfortune happens to me; but do I grumble? No; I am used to it; I can afford to smile.

[*Enter DUNYASHA, and hands a glass of quass to LOPÁKHIN.*]

Ephikhódof. I must be going. [*He knocks against a chair, which falls to the ground.*] There you are! [*In a voice of triumph.*] You see, if I may venture on the expression, the

sort of incidents *inter alia*. It really is astonishing. [*Exit EPHIKHÓDOR.*]

Dunyáša. To tell you the truth, Yermolái Alexéyitch, Ephikhódof has made me a proposal.

Lopákhin. Hmph!

Dunyáša. I hardly know what to do. He is such a well-behaved young man, only so often when he talks one doesn't know what he means. It is all so nice and full of good feeling, but you can't make out what it means. I fancy I am rather fond of him. He adores me passionately. He is a most unfortunate man; every day something seems to happen to him. They call him "Twenty-two misfortunes," that's his nickname.

Lopákhin [*listening*]. There, surely that is them coming!

Dunyáša. They're coming! Oh, what is the matter with me? I am all turning cold.

Lopákhin. Yes, there they are, and no mistake. Let's go and meet them. Will she know me again, I wonder? It is five years since we met.

Dunyáša. I am going to faint! . . . I am going to faint!

[*Two carriages are heard driving up to the house. LOPÁKHIN and DUNYÁSHA exeunt quickly. The stage remains empty. A hubbub begins in the neighboring rooms. FRS walks hastily across the stage, leaning on a walking-stick. He has been to meet them at the station. He is wearing an old-fashioned livery and a tall hat; he mumbles something to himself, but not a word is audible. The noise behind the scenes grows louder and louder. A voice says: "Let's go this way." Enter MADAME RANÉVSKY, ÁNYA, CHARLOTTE, leading a little dog on a chain, all dressed in traveling-dresses; Barbara in great-coat, with a kerchief over her head, GÁYEF, SIMEÓNOF-PÍSHTCHIK, LOPÁKHIN, DUNYÁSHA, carrying parcel and umbrella, servants with luggage, all cross the stage.*]

Ánya. Come through this way. Do you remember what room this is, mamma?

Madame Ranévsky [*joyfully, through her tears*]. The nursery.

Barbara. How cold it is. My hands are simply frozen. [*To MADAME RANÉVSKY.*] Your two rooms, the white room and the

violet room, are just the same as they were, mamma.

Madame Ranévsky. My nursery, my dear, beautiful nursery! This is where I used to sleep when I was a little girl. [*Crying.*] I am like a little girl still. [*Kissing GÁYEF and BARBARA and then GÁYEF again.*] Barbara has not altered a bit; she is just like a nun; and I knew Dunyáša at once. [*Kissing DUNYÁSHA.*]

Gáyef. Your train was two hours late. What do you think of that? There's punctuality for you!

Charlotte [*to SIMEÓNOF-PÍSHTCHIK*]. My little dog eats nuts.

Pishtchik [*astonished*]. You don't say so! Well, I never!

[*Exeunt all but ÁNYA and DUNYÁSHA.*]

Dunyáša. At last you've come! [*She takes off ÁNYA's overcoat and hat.*]

Ánya. I have not slept for four nights on the journey. I am frozen to death.

Dunyáša. It was Lent when you went away. There was snow on the ground; it was freezing; but now! Oh, my dear! [*Laughing and kissing her.*] How I have waited for you, my joy, my light! Oh, I must tell you something at once, I cannot wait another minute.

Ánya [*without interest*]. What, again?

Dunyáša. Ephikhódof, the clerk, proposed to me in Easter Week.

Ánya. Same old story. . . . [*Putting her hair straight.*] All my hairpins have dropped out.

[*She is very tired, staggering with fatigue.*]

Dunyáša. I hardly know what to think of it. He loves me! Oh, how he loves me!

Ánya [*looking into her bedroom, affectionately*]. My room, my windows, just as if I had never gone away! I am at home again! When I wake up in the morning I shall run out into the garden. . . . Oh, if only I could get to sleep! I have not slept the whole journey from Paris, I was so nervous and anxious.

Dunyáša. Monsieur Trophimof arrived the day before yesterday.

Ánya [*joyfully*]. Peter?

Dunyáša. He is sleeping outside in the bath-house; he is living there. He was afraid he might be in the way. [*Looking at her watch.*] I'd like to go and wake him, only Mamzelle Barbara told me not to. "Mind you don't wake him," she said.

[*Enter BARBARA with bunch of keys hanging from her girdle.*]

Barbara. Dunyáša, go and get some coffee, quick. Mamma wants some coffee.

Dunyáša. In a minute! [*Exit DUNYÁSHA.*]

Barbara. Well, thank Heaven, you have come. Here you are at home again. [*Caressing her.*] My little darling is back! My pretty one is back!

Ánya. What I've had to go through!

Barbara. I can believe you.

Ánya. I left here in Holy Week. How cold it was! Charlotte would talk the whole way and keep doing conjuring tricks. What on earth made you tie Charlotte round my neck?

Barbara. Well, you couldn't travel alone, my pet. At seventeen!

Ánya. When we got to Paris, it was so cold! There was snow on the ground. I can't talk French a bit. Mamma was on the fifth floor of a big house. When I arrived there were a lot of Frenchmen with her, and ladies, and an old Catholic priest with a book, and it was very uncomfortable and full of tobacco smoke. I suddenly felt so sorry for mamma, oh, so sorry! I took her head in my arms and squeezed it and could not let it go, and then mamma kept kissing me and crying.

Barbara [crying]. Don't go on; don't go on!

Ánya. She's sold her villa near Mentone already. She's nothing left, absolutely nothing; and I hadn't a farthing either. We only just managed to get home. And mamma won't understand! We get out at a station to have some dinner, and she asks for all the most expensive things and gives the waiters a florin each for a tip; and Charlotte does the same. And Yáša wanted his portion, too. It was too awful! Yáša is mamma's new manservant. We have brought him back with us.

Barbara. I've seen the rascal.

Ánya. Come, tell me all about everything! Has the interest on the mortgage been paid?

Barbara. How could it be?

Ánya. Oh, dear! Oh, dear!

Barbara. The property will be sold in August.

Ánya. Oh, dear! Oh, dear!

Lopákhin [looking in at the door and mooing like a cow]. Moo-oo! [*He goes away again.*]

Barbara [laughing through her tears, and shaking her fist at the door]. Oh, I should like to give him one!

Ánya [embracing BARBARA softly]. Barbara, has he proposed to you?

[*BARBARA shakes her head.*]

Ánya. And yet I am sure he loves you. Why don't you come to an understanding? What are you waiting for?

Barbara. I don't think anything will come of it. He has so much to do; he can't be bothered with me; he hardly takes any notice. Confound the man, I can't bear to see him! Every one talks about our marriage; every one congratulates me; but, as a matter of fact, there is nothing in it; it's all a dream. [*Changing her tone.*] You've got on a brooch like a bee.

Ánya [sadly]. Mamma bought it for me. [*Going into her room, talking gayly, like a child.*] When I was in Paris, I went up in a balloon!

Barbara. How glad I am you are back, my little pet! my pretty one!

[*DUNYÁSHA has already returned with a coffee-pot and begins to prepare the coffee.*]

Barbara [standing by the door]. I trudge about all day looking after things, and I think and think. What are we to do? If only we could marry you to some rich man it would be a load off my mind. I would go into a retreat, and then to Kief, to Moscow; I would tramp about from one holy place to another, always tramping and tramping. What bliss!

Ánya. The birds are singing in the garden. What time is it now?

Barbara. It must be past two. It is time to go to bed, my darling. [*Following ÁNYA into her room.*] What bliss!

[*Enter YÁSHA with a shawl and a traveling-bag.*]

Yáša [crossing the stage, delicately]. May I pass this way, mademoiselle?

Dunyáša. One would hardly know you, Yáša. How you've changed abroad!

Yáša. Ahem! And who may you be?

Dunyáša. When you left here I was a little thing like that [*indicating with her hand*]. My name is Dunyáša, Theodore Kozoyédof's daughter. Don't you remember me?

Yáša. Ahem! You little cucumber!

[*He looks round cautiously, then embraces her. She screams and drops a saucer. Exit YÁSHA hastily.*]

Barbara [in the doorway, crossly]. What's all this?

Dunyáša [crying]. I've broken a saucer.

Barbara. Well, it brings luck.

[*Enter ÁNYA from her room.*]

Ánya. We must tell mamma that Peter's here.

Barbara. I've told them not to wake him.

Ánya [*thoughtfully*]. It's just six years since papa died. And only a month afterwards poor little Grisha was drowned in the river; my pretty little brother, only seven years old! It was too much for mamma; she ran away, ran away without looking back. [*Shuddering.*] How well I can understand her, if only she knew! [*A pause.*] Peter Trophímof was Grisha's tutor; he might remind her.

[*Enter FIRS in long coat and white waistcoat.*]

Firs [*going over to the coffee-pot, anxiously*]. My mistress is going to take coffee here. [*Putting on white gloves.*] Is the coffee ready? [*Sternly, to DUNYÁSHA.*] Here, girl, where's the cream?

Dunyásha. Oh, dear! oh, dear! [*Exit DUNYÁSHA hastily.*]

Firs [*bustling about the coffee-pot*]. Ah, you . . . job-lot!¹ [*Mumbling to himself.*] She's come back from Paris. The master went to Paris once in a post-chaise. [*Laughing.*]

Barbara. What is it, Firs?

Firs. I beg your pardon? [*Joyfully.*] My mistress has come home; at last I've seen her. Now I'm ready to die.

[*He cries with joy. Enter MADAME RANÉVSKY, LOPÁKHIN, GÁYEF, and PÍSHTCHIK; PÍSHTCHIK in Russian breeches and coat of fine cloth. GÁYEF as he enters makes gestures as if playing billiards.*]

Madame Ranévsky. What was the expression? Let me see. "I'll put the red in the corner pocket; double into the middle—"

Gáyef. I'll chip the red in the right-hand top. Once upon a time, Lyuba, when we were children, we used to sleep here side by side in two little cots, and now I'm fifty-one, and can't bring myself to believe it.

Lopákhin. Yes; time flies.

Gáyef. Who's that?

Lopákhin. Time flies, I say.

Gáyef. There's a smell of patchouli!

Ánya. I am going to bed. Good-night, mamma. [*Kissing her mother.*]

Madame Ranévsky. My beloved little girl! [*Kissing her hands.*] Are you glad you're home again? I can't come to my right senses.

Ánya. Good-night, uncle.

Gáyef [*kissing her face and hands*]. God bless you, little Ánya. How like your mother you

are! [*To MADAME RANÉVSKY.*] You were just such another girl at her age, Lyuba.

[ÁNYA shakes hands with LOPÁKHIN and SIMEÓNOF-PÍSHTCHIK, and exit, shutting her bedroom door behind her.]

Madame Ranévsky. She's very, very tired.

Pishtchik. It must have been a long journey.

Barbara. [*To LOPÁKHIN and PÍSHTCHIK.*] Well, gentlemen, it's past two; time you were off.

Madame Ranévsky [*laughing*]. You haven't changed a bit, Barbara! [*Drawing her to herself and kissing her.*] I'll just finish my coffee, then we'll all go. [*FIRS puts a footstool under her feet.*] Thank you, friend. I'm used to my coffee. I drink it day and night. Thank you, you dear old man. [*Kissing FIRS.*]

Barbara. I'll go and see if they've got all the luggage. [*Exit BARBARA.*]

Madame Ranévsky. Can it be me that's sitting here? [*Laughing.*] I want to jump and wave my arms about. [*Pausing and covering her face.*] Surely I must be dreaming! God knows I love my country. I love it tenderly. I couldn't see out of the window from the train, I was crying so. [*Crying.*] However, I must drink my coffee. Thank you, Firs; thank you, you dear old man. I'm so glad to find you still alive.

Firs. The day before yesterday.

Gáyef. He's hard of hearing.

Lopákhin. I've got to be off for Kharkof by the five-o'clock train. Such a nuisance! I wanted to stay and look at you and talk to you. You're as splendid as you always were.

Pishtchik [*sighing heavily*]. Handsomer than ever and dressed like a Parisian . . . Perish my wagon and all its wheels!

Lopákhin. Your brother, Leoníd Andréyitch, says I'm a snob, a money-grubber. He can say what he likes. I don't care a hang. Only I want you to believe in me as you used to; I want your wonderful, touching eyes to look at me as they used to. Merciful God in heaven! My father was your father's serf, and your grandfather's serf before him; but you, you did so much for me in the old days that I've forgotten everything, and I love you like a sister—more than a sister.

Madame Ranévsky. I can't sit still! I can't do it! [*Jumping up and walking about in great agitation.*] This happiness is more than I can bear. Laugh at me! I am a fool! [*Kissing a*

¹ Job-lot. In the original, *nedotěpa*, a word invented by Tchekhov, and now established as classical. Derived from *ne*, not, and *dotyápat*, to finish chopping.

cupboard.] My darling old cupboard! [*Caressing a table.*] My dear little table!

Gáyef. Nurse is dead since you went away.

Madame Ranévsky [*sitting down and drinking coffee*]. Yes, Heaven rest her soul. They wrote and told me.

Gáyef. And Anastási is dead. Squint-eyed Peter has left us and works in the town at the Police Inspector's now.

[*GÁYEF takes out a box of sugar candy from his pocket, and begins to eat it.*]

Pishtchik. My daughter Dáshenka sent her compliments.

Lopákhin. I long to say something charming and delightful to you. [*Looking at his watch.*] I'm just off; there's no time to talk. Well, yes, I'll put it in two or three words. You know that your cherry orchard is going to be sold to pay the mortgage: the sale is fixed for the 22d of August; but don't you be uneasy, my dear lady; sleep peacefully; there's a way out of it. This is my plan. Listen to me carefully. Your property is only fifteen miles from the town; the railway runs close beside it; and if only you will cut up the cherry orchard and the land along the river into building lots and let it off on lease for villas, you will get at least two thousand five hundred pounds a year out of it.

Gáyef. Come, Come! What rubbish you're talking!

Madame Ranévsky. I don't quite understand what you mean, Yermolái Alexéyitch.

Lopákhin. You will get a pound a year at least for every acre from the tenants, and if you advertise the thing at once, I am ready to bet whatever you like, by the autumn you won't have a clod of that earth left on your hands. It'll all be snapped up. In two words, I congratulate you; you are saved. It's a first-class site, with a good deep river. Only, of course you will have to put it in order and clear the ground; you will have to pull down all the old buildings—this house, for instance, which is no longer fit for anything; you'll have to cut down the cherry orchard. . . .

Madame Ranévsky. Cut down the cherry orchard! Excuse me, but you don't know what you are talking about. If there is one thing that's interesting, remarkable in fact, in the whole province, it's our cherry orchard.

Lopákhin. There's nothing remarkable about the orchard except that it's a very big one. It only bears once every two years, and

then you don't know what to do with the fruit. Nobody wants to buy it.

Gáyef. Our cherry orchard is mentioned in Andréyevsky's Encyclopædia.

Lopákhin [*looking at his watch*]. If we don't make up our minds or think of any way, on the 22d of August the cherry orchard and the whole property will be sold by auction. Come, make up your mind! There's no other way out of it, I swear—absolutely none.

Firs. In the old days, forty or fifty years ago, they used to dry the cherries and soak 'em and pickle 'em, and make jam of 'em; and the dried cherries . . .

Gáyef. Shut up, Firs.

Firs. The dried cherries used to be sent in wagons to Moscow and Kharkof. A heap of money! The dried cherries were soft and juicy and sweet and sweet-smelling then. They knew some way in those days.

Madame Ranévsky. And why don't they do it now?

Firs. They've forgotten. Nobody remembers how to do it.

Pishtchik [*to MADAME RANÉVSKY*]. What about Paris? How did you get on? Did you eat frogs?

Madame Ranévsky. Crocodiles.

Pishtchik. You don't say so! Well, I never!

Lopákhin. Until a little while ago there was nothing but gentry and peasants in the villages; but now villa residents have made their appearance. All the towns, even the little ones, are surrounded by villas now. In another twenty years the villa resident will have multiplied like anything. At present he only sits and drinks tea on his veranda, but it is quite likely that he will soon take to cultivating his three acres of land, and then your old cherry orchard will become fruitful, rich and happy. . . .

Gáyef [*angry*]. What gibberish!

[*Enter BARBARA and YÁSHA.*]

Barbara [*taking out a key and noisily unlocking an old-fashioned cupboard*]. There are two telegrams for you, mamma. Here they are.

Madame Ranévsky [*tearing them up without reading them*]. They're from Paris. I've done with Paris.

Gáyef. Do you know how old this cupboard is, Lyuba? A week ago I pulled out the bottom drawer and saw a date burnt in it. That cupboard was made exactly a hun-

dred years ago. What do you think of that, eh? We might celebrate its jubilee. It's only an inanimate thing, but for all that it's a historic cupboard.

Pishtchik [astonished]. A hundred years? Well, I never!

Gáyef [touching the cupboard]. Yes, it's a wonderful thing. . . . Beloved and venerable cupboard, honor and glory to your existence, which for more than a hundred years has been directed to the noble ideals of justice and virtue. Your silent summons to profitable labor has never weakened in all these hundred years. [Crying.] You have upheld the courage of succeeding generations of our humankind; you have upheld faith in a better future and cherished in us ideals of goodness and social consciousness. [A pause.]

Lopákhin. Yes. . . .

Madame Ranévsky. You haven't changed, Leoníd.

Gáyef [embarrassed]. Off the white in the corner, nip the red in the middle pocket!

Lopákhin [looking at his watch]. Well, I must be off.

Yásha [handing a box to MADAME RANÉVSKY]. Perhaps you'll take your pills now.

Pishtchik. You oughtn't to take medicine, dear lady. It does you neither good nor harm. Give them here, my friend. [He empties all the pills into the palm of his hand, blows on them, puts them in his mouth, and swallows them down with a draught of quass.] There!

Madame Ranévsky [alarmed]. Have you gone off your head?

Pishtchik. I've taken all the pills.

Lopákhin. Greedy feller!

[Every one laughs.]

Firs [mumbling]. They were here in Easter Week and finished off a gallon of pickled gherkins.

Madame Ranévsky. What's he talking about?

Barbara. He's been mumbling like that these three years. We've got used to it.

Yásha. Advancing age.

[CHARLOTTE crosses in a white frock, very thin, tightly laced, with a lorgnette at her waist.]

Lopákhin. Excuse me, Charlotte Ivánovna, I've not paid my respects to you yet. [He prepares to kiss her hand.]

Charlotte [drawing her hand away]. If one allows you to kiss one's hand, you will want

to kiss one's elbow next, and then one's shoulder.

Lopákhin. I'm having no luck to-day. [All laugh.] Charlotte Ivánovna, do us a conjuring trick.

Madame Ranévsky. Charlotte, do do us a conjuring trick.

Charlotte. No, thank you. I'm going to bed. [Exit CHARLOTTE.]

Lopákhin. We shall meet again in three weeks. [Kissing MADAME RANÉVSKY'S hand.] Meanwhile, good-bye. I must be off. [To GÁYEF.] So-long. [Kissing PISHTCHIK.] Ta-ta. [Shaking hands with BARBARA, then with FIRS and YÁSHA.] I hate having to go. [To MADAME RANÉVSKY.] If you make up your mind about the villas, let me know, and I'll raise you five thousand pounds at once. Think it over seriously.

Barbara [angrily]. For Heaven's sake, do go!

Lopákhin. I'm going, I'm going.

[Exit LOPÁKHIN.]

Gáyef. Snob! . . . However, pardon! Barbara's going to marry him; he's Barbara's young man.

Barbara. You talk too much, uncle.

Madame Ranévsky. Why, Barbara, I shall be very glad. He's a nice man.

Pishtchik. Not a doubt of it. . . . A most worthy individual. My Dáshenka, she says . . . oh, she says . . . lots of things. [Snoring and waking up again at once.] By the by, dear lady, can you lend me twenty-five pounds? I've got to pay the interest on my mortgage to-morrow.

Barbara [alarmed]. We can't! We can't!

Madame Ranévsky. It really is a fact that I haven't any money.

Pishtchik. I'll find it somewhere. [Laughing.] I never lose hope. Last time I thought, "Now I really am done for, I'm a ruined man," when behold, they ran a railway over my land and paid me compensation. And so it'll be again; something will happen, if not to-day, then to-morrow. Dáshenka may win the twenty-thousand-pound prize; she's got a ticket in the lottery.

Madame Ranévsky. The coffee's finished. Let's go to bed.

Firs [brushing GÁYEF'S clothes, admonishingly]. You've put on the wrong trousers again. Whatever am I to do with you?

Barbara [softly]. Ánya is asleep. [She opens the window quietly.] The sun's up already; it

isn't cold now. Look, mamma, how lovely the trees are. Heavens! what a sweet air! The starlings are singing!

Gáyef [opening the other window]. The orchard is all white. You've not forgotten it, Lyuba? This long avenue going straight on, straight on, like a ribbon between the trees? It shines like silver on moonlight nights. Do you remember? You've not forgotten?

Madame Ranévsky [looking out into the garden]. Oh, my childhood, my pure and happy childhood! I used to sleep in this nursery. I used to look out from here into the garden. Happiness awoke with me every morning; and the orchard was just the same then as it is now; nothing is altered. *[Laughing with joy.]* It is all white, all white! Oh, my cherry orchard! After the dark and stormy autumn and the frosts of winter you are young again and full of happiness; the angels of heaven have not abandoned you. Oh! if only I could free my neck and shoulders from the stone that weighs them down! If only I could forget my past!

Gáyef. Yes; and this orchard will be sold to pay our debts, however impossible it may seem. . . .

Madame Ranévsky. Look! There's mamma walking in the orchard . . . in a white frock! *[Laughing with joy.]* There she is!

Gáyef. Where?

Barbara. Heaven help you!

Madame Ranévsky. There's no one there really. It only looked like it; there on the right where the path turns down to the summer-house; there's a white tree that leans over and looks like a woman.

[Enter TROPHÍMOF in a shabby student uniform and spectacles.]

Madame Ranévsky. What a wonderful orchard, with its white masses of blossom and the blue sky above!

Trophímof. Lyubóf Andréyevna! *[She looks around at him.]* I only want to say, "How do you do," and go away at once. *[Kissing her hand eagerly.]* I was told to wait till the morning, but I hadn't the patience.

[MADAME RANÉVSKY looks at him in astonishment.]

Barbara [crying]. This is Peter Trophímof.

Trophímof. Peter Trophímof; I was Grisha's tutor, you know. Have I really altered so much?

[MADAME RANÉVSKY embraces him and cries softly.]

Gáyef. Come, come, that's enough, Lyuba! *Barbara [crying].* I told you to wait till tomorrow, you know, Peter.

Madame Ranévsky. My little Grisha! My little boy! Grisha . . . my son. . . .

Barbara. It can't be helped, mamma. It was the will of God.

Trophímof [gently, crying]. There, there!

Madame Ranévsky [crying]. He was drowned. My little boy was drowned. Why? What was the use of that, my dear? *[In a softer voice.]* Anya's asleep in there, and I am speaking so loud, and making a noise. . . . But tell me, Peter, why have you grown so ugly? Why have you grown so old?

Trophímof. An old woman in the train called me a "mouldy gentleman."

Madame Ranévsky. You were quite a boy then, a dear little student, and now your hair's going and you wear spectacles. Are you really still a student? *[Going toward the door.]*

Trophímof. Yes, I expect I shall be a perpetual student.

Madame Ranévsky [kissing her brother and then BARBARA]. Well, go to bed. You've grown old too, Leoníd.

Pishtchik [following her]. Yes, yes; time for bed. Oh, oh, my gout! I'll stay the night here. Don't forget, Lyubóf Andréyevna, my angel, to-morrow morning . . . twenty-five.

Gáyef. He's still on the same string.

Pishtchik. Twenty-five . . . to pay the interest on my mortgage.

Madame Ranévsky. I haven't any money, my friend.

Pishtchik. I'll pay you back, dear lady. It's a trifling sum.

Madame Ranévsky. Well, well, Leoníd will give it you. Let him have it, Leoníd.

Gáyef [ironical]. I'll give it him right enough! Hold your pocket wide!¹

Madame Ranévsky. It can't be helped. . . . He needs it. He'll pay it back.

[Exit MADAME RANÉVSKY, TROPHÍMOF, PÍSHTCHIK, and FRS. GÁYEF, BARBARA, and YÁSHA remain.]

Gáyef. My sister hasn't lost her old habit of scattering the money. *[To YÁSHA.]* Go away, my lad! You smell of chicken.

Yásha [laughing]. You're just the same as you always were, Leoníd Andréyevitch!

Gáyef. Who's that? *[To BARBARA.]* What does he say?

¹ Hold your pocket wide: a proverbial piece of irony.

Barbara [to YÁSHA]. Your mother's come up from the village. She's been waiting for you since yesterday in the servants' hall. She wants to see you.

Yasha. What a nuisance she is!

Barbara. You wicked, unnatural son!

Yasha. Well, what do I want with her? She might just as well have waited till tomorrow. [*Exit YÁSHA.*]

Barbara. Mamma is just like she used to be; she hasn't changed a bit. If she had her way, she'd give away everything she has.

Gáyef. Yes. [*A pause.*] If people recommend very many cures for an illness, that means that the illness is incurable. I think and think, I batter my brains; I know of many remedies, very many, and that means really that there is none. How nice it would be to get a fortune left one by somebody! How nice it would be if Ánya could marry a very rich man! How nice it would be to go to Yaroslav and try my luck with my aunt the Countess. My aunt is very, very rich, you know.

Barbara [*crying softly*]. If only God would help us!

Gáyef. Don't howl! My aunt is very rich, but she does not like us. In the first place, my sister married a solicitor, not a nobleman. [*ÁNYA appears in the doorway.*] She married a man who was not a nobleman, and it's no good pretending that she has led a virtuous life. She's a dear, kind, charming creature, and I love her very much, but whatever mitigating circumstances one may find for her, there's no getting round it that she's a sinful woman. You can see it in her every gesture.

Barbara [*whispering*]. Ánya is standing in the door!

Gáyef. Who's that? [*A pause.*] It's very odd, something's got into my right eye. I can't see properly out of it. Last Thursday when I was down at the District Court . . .

[*ÁNYA comes down.*]

Barbara. Why aren't you asleep, Ánya?

Ánya. I can't sleep. It's no good trying.

Gáyef. My little pet! [*Kissing ÁNYA's hands and face.*] My little girl! [*Crying.*] You're not my niece; you're my angel; you're my everything. Trust me, trust me. . .

Ánya. I do trust you, uncle. Every one loves you, every one respects you; but dear, dear uncle, you ought to hold your tongue, only to hold your tongue. What were you saying just now about mamma?—about your

own sister? What was the good of saying that?

Gáyef. Yes, yes. [*Covering his face with her hand.*] You're quite right; it was awful of me! Lord, Lord! Save me from myself! And a little while ago I made a speech over a cupboard. What a stupid thing to do! As soon as I had done it, I knew it was stupid.

Barbara. Yes, really, uncle. You ought to hold your tongue. Say nothing; that's all that's wanted.

Ánya. If only you would hold your tongue, you'd be so much happier!

Gáyef. I will! I will! [*Kissing ÁNYA's and BARBARA's hands.*] I'll hold my tongue. But there's one thing I must say; it's business. Last Thursday, when I was down at the District Court, a lot of us were there together, we began to talk about this and that, one thing and another, and it seems I could arrange a loan on note of hand to pay the interest into the bank.

Barbara. If only Heaven would help us!

Gáyef. I'll go in on Tuesday and talk it over again. [*To BARBARA.*] Don't howl! [*To ÁNYA.*] Your mamma shall have a talk with Lopákhin. Of course he won't refuse her. And as soon as you are rested you must go to see your grandmother, the Countess, at Yaroslav. We'll operate from three points, and the trick is done. We'll pay the interest, I'm certain of it. [*Taking sugar candy.*] I swear on my honor, or whatever you will, the property shall not be sold. [*Excitedly.*] I swear by my hope of eternal happiness! There's my hand on it. Call me a base, dishonorable man if I let it go to auction. I swear by my whole being!

Ánya [*calm again and happy*]. What a dear you are, uncle, and how clever! [*Embraces him.*] Now I'm easy again. I'm easy again! I'm happy!

[*Enter FIRS.*]

Firs [*reproachfully*]. Leoníd Andréyevitch, have you no fear of God? When are you going to bed?

Gáyef. I'm just off—just off. You get along, Firs. I'll undress myself all right. Come, children, by-bye! Details to-morrow, but now let's go to bed. [*Kissing ÁNYA and BARBARA.*] I'm a good Liberal, a man of the eighties. People abuse the eighties, but I think that I may say I've suffered something for my convictions in my time. It's not for nothing that the peasants love me. We ought

to know the peasants; we ought to know with what . . .

Ánya. You're at it again, uncle!

Barbara. Why don't you hold your tongue, uncle?

Firs [angrily]. Leoníd Andréyevitch!

Gáyef. I'm coming; I'm coming. Now go to bed. Off two cushions in the middle pocket! I start another life! . . . [Exit, with Firs hobbling after him.]

Ánya. Now my mind is at rest. I don't want to go to Yaroslav; I don't like grand-mamma; but my mind is at rest, thanks to Uncle Leoníd. [She sits down.]

Barbara. Time for bed. I'm off. Whilst you were away there's been a scandal. You know that nobody lives in the old servants' quarters, except the old people, Ephim, Pauline, Evstignéy, and old Karp. Well, they took to having in all sorts of queer fish to sleep there with them. I didn't say a word. But at last I heard they had spread a report that I had given orders that they were to have nothing but peas to eat; out of stinginess, you understand? It was all Evstignéy's doing. "Very well," I said to myself, "you wait a bit." So I sent for Evstignéy. [Yawning.] He comes. "Now then, Evstignéy," I said, "you old imbecile, how do you dare . . ." [Looking at ÁNYA.] Ánya, Ánya! [A pause.] She's asleep. [Taking ÁNYA's arm.] Let's go to bed. Come along. [Leading her away.] Sleep on, my little one! Come along; come along! [They go towards ÁNYA's room. In the distance beyond the orchard a shepherd plays his pipe. TROPHÍMOF crosses the stage and, seeing BARBARA and ÁNYA, stops.] 'Sh! She's asleep, she's asleep! Come along, my love.

Ánya [drowsily]. I'm so tired! Listen to the bells! Uncle, dear uncle! Mamma! Uncle!

Barbara. Come along, my love! Come along.

[Exeunt BARBARA and ÁNYA to the bedroom.]

Trophímo [with emotion]. My sunshine! My spring!

ACT TWO

In the open fields; an old crooked half-ruined shrine. Near it a well; big stones, apparently old tombstones; an old bench. Road to the estate beyond. On one side rise dark poplar trees. Beyond them begins the cherry orchard. In the

distance a row of telegraph poles, and, far away on the horizon, the dim outlines of a big town, visible only in fine, clear weather. It is near sunset.

CHARLOTTE, YÁSHA, and DUNYÁSHA sit on the bench. EPHIKHÓDOF stands by them and plays on a guitar; they meditate. CHARLOTTE wears an old peaked cap.¹ She has taken a gun from off her shoulders and is mending the buckle of the strap.

Charlotte [thoughtfully]. I have no proper passport. I don't know how old I am; I always feel I am still young. When I was a little girl my father and mother used to go about from one country fair to another, giving performances, and very good ones, too. I used to do the *salto mortale* and all sorts of tricks. When papa and mamma died, an old German lady adopted me and educated me. Good! When I grew up I became a governess. But where I come from and who I am, I haven't a notion. Who my parents were—very likely they weren't married—I don't know. [Taking a cucumber from her pocket and beginning to eat.] I don't know anything about it. [A pause.] I long to talk so, and I have no one to talk to, I have no friends or relations.

Ephikhódof [playing on the guitar and singing].

"What is the noisy world to me?

Oh, what are friends and foes?"

How sweet it is to play upon a mandolin!

Dunyásha. That's a guitar, not a mandolin. [She looks at herself in a hand-glass and powders her face.]

Ephikhódof. For the madman who loves, it is a mandolin. [Singing.]

"Oh, that my heart were cheered

By the warmth of requited love."

[YÁSHA joins in.]

Charlotte. How badly these people do sing!

Foo! Like jackals howling!

Dunyásha. [To YÁSHA.] What happiness it must be to live abroad!

Yásha. Of course it is; I quite agree with you. [He yawns and lights a cigar.]

Ephikhódof. It stands to reason. Everything abroad has attained a certain culmination.²

¹ *Furázka*, the commonest men's headgear in Russia, shaped like a yachting cap.

² *Culmination*. This represents a similar blunder of Ephikhódof's in the original.

Yásha. That's right.

Ephikhódof. I am a man of cultivation; I have studied various remarkable books, but I cannot fathom the direction of my preferences; do I want to live or do I want to shoot myself, so to speak? But in order to be ready for all contingencies, I always carry a revolver in my pocket. Here it is. [*Showing revolver.*]

Charlotte. That's done. I'm off. [*Slinging the rifle over her shoulder.*] You're a clever fellow, Ephikhódof, and very alarming. Women must fall madly in love with you. Brrr! [*Going.*] These clever people are all so stupid; I have no one to talk to. I am always alone, always alone; I have no friends or relations, and who I am, or why I exist, is a mystery. [*Exit slowly.*]

Ephikhódof. Strictly speaking, without touching upon other matters, I must protest *inter alia* that destiny treats me with the utmost rigor, as a tempest might treat a small ship. If I labor under a misapprehension, how is it that when I woke up this morning, behold, so to speak, I perceived sitting on my chest a spider of preternatural dimensions, like that? [*Indicating with both hands.*] And if I go to take a draught of quass, I am sure to find something of the most indelicate character, in the nature of a cockroach. [*A pause.*] Have you read Buckle? [*A pause.—To DUNYÁSHA.*] I should like to trouble you, Avdotya Fëdorovna,¹ for a momentary interview.

Dunyásha. Talk away.

Ephikhódof. I should prefer to conduct it *tête-à-tête*. [*Sighing.*]

Dunyásha [*confused*]. Very well, only first please fetch me my cloak.² It's by the cupboard. It's rather damp here.

Ephikhódof. Very well, mademoiselle. I will go and fetch it, mademoiselle. Now I know what to do with my revolver. [*Takes his guitar and exit, playing.*]

Yásha. Twenty-two misfortunes! Between you and me, he's a stupid fellow. [*Yawning.*]

Dunyásha. Heaven help him, he'll shoot himself! [*A pause.*] I have grown so nervous, I am always in a twitter. I was quite a little girl when they took me into the household, and now I have got quite disused to

¹ Avdotya Fëdorovna (the *ä* is to be pronounced like the *yach* in *yacht*.) Dunya (diminutive Dunyásha), stands for Avdotya, formally Evdokiya, representing the Greek Eudoxia.

² Cloak. *Talmotchka*, a diminutive of *talma*, a sort of big cape, named after the tragedian.

common life, and my hands are as white as white, like a lady's. I have grown so refined, so delicate and genteel, I am afraid of everything. I'm always frightened. And if you deceive me, Yásha, I don't know what will happen to my nerves.

Yásha [*kissing her*]. You little cucumber! Of course every girl ought to behave herself properly; there's nothing I dislike as much as when girls aren't proper in their behavior.

Dunyásha. I've fallen dreadfully in love with you. You're so educated; you can talk about anything! [*A pause.*]

Yásha [*yawning*]. Yes. . . . The way I look at it is this; if a girl falls in love with anybody, then I call her immoral. [*A pause.*] How pleasant it is to smoke one's cigar in the open air. [*Listening.*] There's some one coming. It's the missis and the rest of 'em. . . . [*DUNYÁSHA embraces him hastily.*] Go towards the house as if you'd just been for a bathe. Go by this path or else they'll meet you and think that I've been walking out with you. I can't stand that sort of thing.

Dunyásha [*coughing softly*]. Your cigar has given me a headache.

[*Exit DUNYÁSHA. YÁSHA remains sitting by the shrine.*]

[*Enter MADAME RANÉVSKY, GÁYEF, and LOPÁKHIN.*]

Lopákhin. You must make up your minds once and for all. Time waits for no man. The question is perfectly simple. Are you going to let off the land for villas or not? Answer in one way; yes or no? Only one word!

Madame Ranévsky. Who's smoking horrible cigars here? [*She sits down.*]

Gáyef. How handy it is now they've built that railway. [*Sitting.*] We've been into town for lunch and back again. . . . Red in the middle! I must just go up to the house and have a game.

Madame Ranévsky. There's no hurry.

Lopákhin. Only one word—yes or no! [*Entreatingly.*] Come, answer the question!

Gáyef [*yawning*]. Who's that?

Madame Ranévsky [*looking into her purse*]. I had a lot of money yesterday, but there's hardly any left now. Poor Barbara tries to save money by feeding us all on milk soup; the old people in the kitchen get nothing but peas, and yet I go squandering aimlessly. . . . [*Dropping her purse and scattering gold coins; vexed.*] There, I've dropped it all!

Yásha. Allow me, I'll pick it up. [*Collecting the coins.*]

Madame Ranévsky. Yes, please do, Yásha! Whatever made me go into town for lunch? I hate your horrid restaurant with the organ, and the tablecloths all smelling of soap. Why do you drink so much, Leoníd? Why do you eat so much? Why do you talk so much? You talked too much at the restaurant again, and most unsuitably, about the seventies, and the decadents. And to whom? Fancy talking about decadents to the waiters!

Lopákhin. Quite true.

Gáyef [*with a gesture*]. I'm incorrigible, that's plain. [*Irritably to YÁSHA.*] What do you keep dodging about in front of me for?

Yásha [*laughing*]. I can't hear your voice without laughing.

Gáyef [*To MADAME RANÉVSKY*]. Either he or I . . .

Madame Ranévsky. Go away, Yásha; run along.

Yásha [*handing MADAME RANÉVSKY her purse*]. I'll go at once. [*Restraining his laughter with difficulty.*] This very minute. [*Exit.*]

Lopákhin. Derigánof, the millionaire, wants to buy your property. They say he'll come to the auction himself.

Madame Ranévsky. How did you hear?

Lopákhin. I was told so in town.

Gáyef. Our aunt at Yaroslav has promised to send something; but I don't know when, or how much.

Lopákhin. How much will she send? Ten thousand pounds? Twenty thousand pounds?

Madame Ranévsky. Oh, come. . . . A thousand or fifteen hundred at the most.

Lopákhin. Excuse me, but in all my life I never met anybody so frivolous as you two, so crazy and unbusiness-like! I tell you in plain Russian your property is going to be sold, and you don't seem to understand what I say.

Madame Ranévsky. Well, what are we to do? Tell us what you want us to do.

Lopákhin. Don't I tell you every day? Every day I say the same thing over and over again. You must lease off the cherry orchard and the rest of the estate for villas; you must do it at once, this very moment; the auction will be on you in two twos! Try and understand. Once you make up your mind there are to be villas, you can get all the money you want, and you're saved.

Madame Ranévsky. Villas and villa residents, oh, please, . . . it's so vulgar!

Gáyef. I quite agree with you.

Lopákhin. I shall either cry, or scream, or faint. I can't stand it! You'll be the death of me. [*To GÁYEF.*] You're an old woman!

Gáyef. Who's that?

Lopákhin. You're an old woman! [*Going.*]

Madame Ranévsky [*frightened*]. No, don't go. Stay here, there's a dear! Perhaps we shall think of some way.

Lopákhin. What's the good of thinking!

Madame Ranévsky. Please don't go; I want you. At any rate, it's gayer when you're here. [*A pause.*] I keep expecting something to happen, as if the house were going to tumble down about our ears.

Gáyef [*in deep abstraction*]. Off the cushion on the corner; double into the middle pocket . . .

Madame Ranévsky. We have been very, very sinful!

Lopákhin. You! What sins have you committed?

Gáyef [*eating candy*]. They say I've devoured all my substance in sugar candy. [*Laughing.*]

Madame Ranévsky. Oh, the sins that I have committed . . . I've always squandered money at random like a mad-woman; I married a man who made nothing but debts. My husband drank himself to death on champagne; he was a fearful drinker. Then for my sins I fell in love and went off with another man; and immediately—that was my first punishment—a blow full on the head . . . here, in this very river . . . my little boy was drowned; and I went abroad, right, right away, never to come back any more, never to see this river again. . . . I shut my eyes and ran, like a mad thing, and he came after me, pitiless and cruel. I bought a villa at Mentone, because he fell ill there, and for three years I knew no rest day or night; the sick man tormented and wore down my soul. Then, last year, when my villa was sold to pay my debts, I went off to Paris, and he came and robbed me of everything, left me and took up with another woman, and I tried to poison myself. . . . It was all so stupid, so humiliating. . . . Then suddenly I longed to be back in Russia, in my own country, with my little girl. . . . [*Wiping away her tears.*] Lord, Lord, be merciful to me; forgive my sins! Do not punish me any more! [*Taking a telegram from*

her pocket.] I got this to-day from Paris. . . . He asks to be forgiven, begs me to go back. . . . [Tearing up the telegram.] Isn't that music that I hear? [Listening.]

Gáyef. That's our famous Jewish band. You remember? Four fiddles, a flute, and a double bass.

Madame Ranévsky. Does it still exist? We must make them come up sometime; we'll have a dance.

Lopákhin [listening]. I don't hear anything. [Singing softly.]

"The Germans for a fee will turn
A Russ into a Frenchman."

[Laughing.] I saw a very funny piece at the theatre last night; awfully funny!

Madame Ranévsky. It probably wasn't a bit funny. You people oughtn't to go and see plays; you ought to try to see yourselves; to see what a dull life you lead, and how much too much you talk.

Lopákhin. Quite right. To tell the honest truth, our life's an imbecile affair. [A pause.] My papa was a peasant, an idiot; he understood nothing; he taught me nothing; all he did was to beat me, when he was drunk, with a walking-stick. As a matter of fact I'm just as big a blockhead and idiot as he was. I never did any lessons; my handwriting's abominable; I write so badly I'm ashamed before people; like a pig.

Madame Ranévsky. You ought to get married.

Lopákhin. Yes, that's true.

Madame Ranévsky. Why not marry Barbara? She's a nice girl.

Lopákhin. Yes.

Madame Ranévsky. She's a nice straightforward creature; works all day; and what's most important, she loves you. You've been fond of her for a long time.

Lopákhin. Well, why not? I'm quite willing. She's a very nice girl. [A pause.]

Gáyef. I've been offered a place in a bank. Six hundred pounds a year. Do you hear?

Madame Ranévsky. You in a bank! Stay where you are.

[Enter FIRS, carrying an overcoat.]

Firs. [To Gáyef.] Put this on, please, master; it's getting damp.

Gáyef [putting on the coat]. What a plague you are, Firs!

Firs. What's the use. . . . You went off and never told me. [Examining his clothes.]

Madame Ranévsky. How old you've got, Firs!

Firs. I beg your pardon?

Lopákhin. She says how old you've got!

Firs. I've been alive a long time. When they found me a wife, your father wasn't even born yet. [Laughing.] And when the Liberation came I was already chief valet. But I wouldn't have any Liberation then; I stayed with the master. [A pause.] I remember how happy everybody was, but why they were happy they didn't know themselves.

Lopákhin. It was fine before then. Anyway they used to flog 'em.

Firs [mishearing him]. I should think so! The peasants minded the masters, and the masters minded the peasants, but now it's all higgledy-piggledy; you can't make head or tail of it.

Gáyef. Shut up, Firs. I must go into town again to-morrow. I've been promised an introduction to a general who'll lend money on a bill.

Lopákhin. You'll do no good. You won't even pay the interest; set your mind at ease about that.

Madame Ranévsky. [to LOPÁKHIN.] He's only talking nonsense. There's no such general at all.

[Enter TROPHÍMOF, ÁNYA and BARBARA.]

Gáyef. Here come the others.

Ánya. Here's mamma.

Madame Ranévsky [tenderly]. Come along, come along . . . my little ones. . . . [Embracing Ánya and BARBARA.] If only you knew how much I love you both! Sit beside me . . . there, like that. [Every one sits.]

Lopákhin. The Perpetual Student's always among the girls.

TrophímoF. It's no affair of yours.

Lopákhin. He's nearly fifty and still a student.

TrophímoF. Stop your idiotic jokes!

Lopákhin. What are you losing your temper for, silly?

TrophímoF. Why can't you leave me alone?

Lopákhin [laughing]. I should like to know what your opinion is of me.

TrophímoF. My opinion of you, Yermolái Alexéyitch, is this. You're a rich man; you'll soon be a millionaire. Just as a beast of prey which devours everything that comes in its way is necessary for the conversion of matter, so you are necessary, too. [All laugh.]

Barbara. Tell us something about the planets, Peter, instead.

Madame Ranévsky. No. Let's go on with the conversation we were having yesterday.

Trophimof. What about?

Gáyef. About the proud man.

Trophimof. We had a long talk yesterday, but we didn't come to any conclusion. There is something mystical in the proud man in the sense in which you use the words. You may be right from your point of view, but, if we look at it simple-mindedly, what room is there for pride? Is there any sense in it, when man is so poorly constructed from the physiological point of view, when the vast majority of us are so gross and stupid and profoundly unhappy? We must give up admiring ourselves. The only thing to do is to work.

Gáyef. We shall die all the same.

Trophimof. Who knows? And what does it mean, to die? Perhaps man has a hundred senses, and when he dies only the five senses that we know perish with him, and the other ninety-five remain alive.

Madame Ranévsky. How clever you are, Peter!

Lopákhin [ironically]. Oh, extraordinary!

Trophimof. Mankind marches forward, perfecting its strength. Everything that is unattainable for us now will one day be near and clear; but we must work; we must help with all our force those who seek for truth. At present only a few men work in Russia. The vast majority of the educated people that I know seek after nothing, do nothing, and are as yet incapable of work. They call themselves the "Intelligentsia," they say "thou" and "thee" to the servants, they treat the peasants like animals, learn nothing, read nothing serious, do absolutely nothing, only talk about science, and understand little or nothing about art. They are all serious; they all have solemn faces; they only discuss important subjects; they philosophize; but meanwhile the vast majority of us, ninety-nine per cent, live like savages; at the least thing they curse and punch people's heads; they eat like beasts and sleep in dirt and bad air; there are bugs everywhere, evil smells, damp and moral degradation. . . . It's plain that all our clever conversations are only meant to distract our own attention and other people's. Show me where those erches are, that they're always talking so much about; or those reading-rooms. They are only things

people write about in novels; they don't really exist at all. Nothing exists but dirt, vulgarity, and Asiatic ways. I am afraid of solemn faces; I dislike them; I am afraid of solemn conversations. Let us rather hold our tongues.

Lopákhin. Do you know, I get up at five every morning; I work from morning till night; I am always handling my own money or other people's, and I see the sort of men there are about me. One only has to begin to do anything to see how few honest and decent people there are. Sometimes, as I lie awake in bed, I think: "O Lord, you have given us mighty forests, boundless fields and immeasurable horizons, and, we living in their midst, ought really to be giants."

Madame Ranévsky. Oh, dear, you want giants! They are all very well in fairy stories; but in real life they are rather alarming.

[EPHIKHÓDOR passes at the back of the scene, playing on his guitar.]

Madame Ranévsky [pensively]. There goes Ephikhódof.

Ánya [pensively]. There goes Ephikhódof.

Gáyef. The sun has set.

Trophimof. Yes.

Gáyef [as if declaiming, but not loud]. O Nature, wonderful Nature, you glow with eternal light; beautiful and indifferent, you whom we call our mother, uniting in yourself both life and death, you animate and you destroy . . .

Barbara [entreatingly]. Uncle!

Ánya. You're at it again, uncle.

Trophimof. You'd far better double the red into the middle pocket.

Gáyef. I'll hold my tongue! I'll hold my tongue!

[They all sit pensively. Silence reigns, broken only by the mumbling of old Firs. Suddenly a distant sound is heard as if from the sky, the sound of a string breaking, dying away, melancholy.]

Madame Ranévsky. What's that?

Lopákhin. I don't know. It's a lifting-tub given away somewhere away in the mines. It must be a long way off.

Gáyef. Perhaps it's some sort of bird . . . a heron, or something.

Trophimof. Or an owl. . . .

Madame Ranévsky [shuddering]. There is something uncanny about it!

Firs. The same thing happened before the

great misfortune: the owl screeched and the samovar kept humming.

Gáyef. What great misfortune?

Firs. The Liberation.

[*A pause.*]

Madame Ranévsky. Come, every one, let's go in; it's getting late. [*To ÁNYA.*] You've tears in your eyes. What is it, little one? [*Embracing her.*]

Ánya. Nothing, mamma. I'm all right.

Trophimof. There's some one coming.

[*A TRAMP appears in a torn white peaked cap and overcoat. He is slightly drunk.*]

Tramp. Excuse me, but can I go through this way straight to the station?

Gáyef. Certainly. Follow this path.

Tramp. I am uncommonly obliged to you, sir. [*Coughing.*] We're having lovely weather. [*Declaiming.*] "Brother, my suffering brother" . . . "Come forth to the Volga. Who moans?" . . . [*To BARBARA.*] Mademoiselle, please spare a sixpence for a hungry fellow-countryman.

[*BARBARA, frightened, screams.*]

Lopákhin [angrily]. There's a decency for every indecency to observe!

Madame Ranévsky. Take this; here you are. [*Fumbling in her purse.*] I haven't any silver. . . . Never mind, take this sovereign.

Tramp. I am uncommonly obliged to you, madam. [*Exit TRAMP. Laughter.*]

Barbara [frightened]. I'm going! I'm going! Oh, mamma, there's nothing for the servants to eat at home, and you've gone and given this man a sovereign.

Madame Ranévsky. What's to be done with your stupid old mother? I'll give you up everything I have when I get back. Yermolái Alexéyitch, lend me some more money.

Lopákhin. Very good.

Madame Ranévsky. Come along, every one; it's time to go in. We've settled all about your marriage between us, Barbara. I wish you joy.

Barbara [through her tears]. You mustn't joke about such things, mamma.

Lopákhin. Amelia, get thee to a nunnery, go!

Gáyef. My hands are all trembling; it's ages since I had a game of billiards.

Lopákhin. Amelia, nymphlet, in thine orisons remember me.¹

Madame Ranévsky. Come along. It's nearly supper-time.

Barbara. How he frightened me! My heart is simply throbbing.

Lopákhin. Allow me to remind you, the cherry orchard is to be sold on the 22d of August. Bear that in mind; bear that in mind!

[*Exeunt all except TROPHIMOF and*

ÁNYA.]

Ánya [laughing]. Many thanks to the Tramp for frightening Barbara; at last we are alone.

Trophimof. Barbara's afraid we shall go and fall in love with each other. Day after day she never leaves us alone. With her narrow mind she cannot understand that we are above love. To avoid everything petty, everything illusory, everything that prevents one from being free and happy, that is the whole meaning and purpose of our life. Forward! We march on irresistibly towards that bright star which burns far, far before us! Forward! Don't tarry, comrades!

Ánya [clasping her hands]. What beautiful things you say! [*A pause.*] Isn't it enchanting here to-day!

Trophimof. Yes, it's wonderful weather.

Ánya. What have you done to me, Peter? Why is it that I no longer love the cherry orchard as I did? I used to love it so tenderly; I thought there was no better place on earth than our garden.

Trophimof. All Russia is our garden. The earth is great and beautiful; it is full of wonderful places. [*A pause.*] Think, Ánya, your grandfather, your great-grandfather and all your ancestors were serf-owners, owners of living souls. Do not human spirits look out at you from every tree in the orchard, from every leaf and every stem? Do you not hear human voices? . . . Oh! it is terrible. Your orchard frightens me. When I walk through it in the evening or at night, the rugged bark on the trees glows with a dim light, and the cherry trees seem to see all that happened a hundred and two hundred years ago in painful and oppressive dreams. Well, well, we have fallen at least two hundred years behind the times. We have achieved nothing at all as yet; we have not made up our minds how we stand with the past; we only philosophize, complain of boredom, or drink vodka. It is so plain that, before we can live in the present, we must first redeem the past, and have done with it; and it is only by suffering that we can redeem it, only by strenuous, unremitting toil. Understand that, Ánya.

¹ There is a wretched pun in the original: Ophelia is called Okhmelia (from *okhmelít*, to get drunk).

Ánya. The house we live in has long since ceased to be our house; and I shall go away, I give you my word.

Trophimof. If you have the household keys, throw them in the well and go away. Be free, be free as the wind.

Ánya [enthusiastically]. How beautifully you put it!

Trophimof. Believe what I say, *Ánya*; believe what I say. I'm not thirty yet; I am still young, still a student; but what I have been through! I am hungry as the winter; I am sick, anxious, poor as a beggar. Fate has tossed me hither and thither; I have been everywhere, everywhere. But wherever I have been, every minute, day and night, my soul has been full of mysterious anticipations. I feel the approach of happiness, *Ánya*; I see it coming. . . .

Ánya [pensively]. The moon is rising.

[ΕΡΗΚΗΔΟΦ is heard still playing the same sad tune on his guitar. The moon rises. Somewhere beyond the poplar trees, BARBARA is heard calling for *ÁNYA*: "*Ánya*, where are you?"]

Trophimof. Yes, the moon is rising. [A pause.] There it is, there is happiness; it is coming towards us, nearer and nearer; I can hear the sound of its footsteps. . . . And if we do not see it, if we do not know it, what does it matter? Others will see it.

Barbara [without]. *Ánya*? Where are you?

Trophimof. There's Barbara again! [Angrily.] It really is too bad!

Ánya. Never mind. Let us go down to the river. It's lovely there.

Trophimof. Come on!

[Εξεunt *ÁNYA* and *TROPHIMOF*.]

Barbara [without]. *Ánya*! *Ánya*!

ACT THREE

A sitting-room separated by an arch from a big drawing-room behind. Chandelier lighted. The Jewish band mentioned in Act II is heard playing on the landing. Evening. In the drawing-room they are dancing the grand rond. ΣΙΜΕÓΝΟΦ-ΠΨΙΤΤΧΙΚ is heard crying, "*Promenade à une paire!*"

The dancers come down into the sitting-room. The first pair consists of ΠΨΙΤΤΧΙΚ and CHARLOTTE; the second of ΤΡΟΦΙΜΟΦ and ΜΑΔΑΜΕ ΡΑΝΕΨΚΥ; the third of *ÁNYA* and the POST-OFFICE OFFICIAL; the fourth of BARBARA and the STATIONMASTER, etc., etc. BARBARA is cry-

ing softly and wipes away the tears as she dances. In the last pair comes DUNYÁSHA. They cross the sitting-room.

Pishtchik. "Grand rond, balancez . . . Les cavaliers à genou et remerciez vos dames."

[FIRS in evening dress carries seltzer water across on a tray. ΠΨΙΤΤΧΙΚ and ΤΡΟΦΙΜΟΦ come down into the sitting-room.]

Pishtchik. I am a full-blooded man; I've had two strokes already; it's hard work dancing, but, as the saying goes, "If you run with the pack, bark or no, but anyway wag your tail." I'm as strong as a horse. My old father, who was fond of his joke, rest his soul, used to say, talking of our pedigree, that the ancient stock of the Σιμεόνοφ-Πισττχίκι was descended from that very horse that Caligula made a senator. . . . [Sitting.] But the worst of it is, I've got no money. A hungry dog believes in nothing but meat. [Snoring and waking up again at once.] I'm just the same . . . It's nothing but money, money, with me.

Trophimof. Yes, it's quite true, there is something horse-like about your build.

Pishtchik. Well, well . . . a horse is a jolly creature . . . you can sell a horse.

[A sound of billiards being played in the next room. BARBARA appears in the drawing-room beyond the arch.]

Trophimof [teasing her]. Madame Lopákhin! Madame Lopákhin.

Barbara [angrily]. Mouldy gentleman!

Trophimof. Yes, I'm a mouldy gentleman, and I'm proud of it.

Barbara [bitterly]. We've hired the band, but where's the money to pay for it? [Exit.]

Trophimof. [To ΠΨΙΤΤΧΙΚ.] If the energy which you have spent in the course of your whole life in looking for money to pay the interest on your loans had been diverted to some other purpose, you would have had enough of it, I dare say, to turn the world upside down.

Pishtchik. Nietzsche the philosopher, a very remarkable man, very famous, a man of gigantic intellect, says in his works that it's quite right to forge bank notes.

Trophimof. What, have you read Nietzsche?

Pishtchik. Well . . . Dáshenka told me. . . . But I'm in such a hole, I'd forge 'em for twopence. I've got to pay thirty-one pounds the day after to-morrow. . . . I've got thirteen pounds already. [Feeling his pockets:

alarmed.] My money's gone! I've lost my money! [*Crying.*] Where's my money got to? [*Joyfully.*] Here it is, inside the lining. . . . It's thrown me all in a perspiration.

[*Enter MADAME RANÉVSKY and CHARLOTTE.*]

Madame Ranévsky [*humming a lezginka*]. Why is Leoníd so long? What can he be doing in the town? [*To DUNYÁSHA.*] Dunyásha, ask the musicians if they'll have some tea.

Trophímof. The sale did not come off, in all probability.

Madame Ranévsky. It was a stupid day for the musicians to come; it was a stupid day to have this dance. . . . Well, well, it doesn't matter. . . . [*She sits down and sings softly to herself.*]

Charlotte [*giving PÍSHTCHIK a pack of cards*]. Here is a pack of cards. Think of any card you like.

Pishtchik. I've thought of one.

Charlotte. Now shuffle the pack. That's all right. Give them here, oh, most worthy Mr. Pishtchik. Ein, zwei, drei! Now look and you'll find it in your side pocket.

Pishtchik [*taking a card from his side pocket*]. The Eight of Spades! You're perfectly right. [*Astonished.*] Well, I never!

Charlotte [*holding the pack on the palm of her hand, to TROPHÍMOF*]. Say quickly, what's the top card?

Trophímof. Well, say the Queen of Spades.

Charlotte. Right! [*To PÍSHTCHIK.*] Now, then, what's the top card?

Pishtchik. Ace of Hearts.

Charlotte. Right! [*She claps her hands; the pack of cards disappears.*] What a beautiful day we've been having.

[*A mysterious female VOICE answers her as if from under the floor: "Yes, indeed, a charming day, mademoiselle."*]

Charlotte. You are my beautiful ideal.

The Voice. "I think you also ferry beautiful, mademoiselle."

Stationmaster [*applauding*]. Bravo, Miss Ventriloquist!

Pishtchik [*astonished*]. Well, I never! Bewitching Charlotte Ivánovna, I'm head over ears in love with you.

Charlotte. In love! [*Shrugging her shoulders.*] Are you capable of love? Guter Mensch, aber schlechter Musikant!

¹ *Lezginka*. A lively Caucasian dance in two-four time, popularized by Glinka, and by Rubinstein in his opera, *Demon*.

Trophímof [*slapping PÍSHTCHIK on the shoulder*]. You old horse!

Charlotte. Now, attention, please; one more trick. [*Taking a shawl from a chair.*] Now here's a shawl, and a very pretty shawl; I'm going to sell this very pretty shawl. [*Shaking it.*] Who'll buy? who'll buy?

Pishtchik [*astonished*]. Well, I never!

Charlotte. Ein, zwei, drei!

[*She lifts the shawl quickly; behind it stands ÁNYA, who drops a curtsy, runs to her mother, kisses her, then runs up into the drawing-room amid general applause.*]

Madame Ranévsky [*applauding*]. Bravo! bravo!

Charlotte. Once more. Ein, zwei, drei!

[*She lifts up the shawl; behind it stands BARBARA, bowing.*]

Pishtchik [*astonished*]. Well, I never!

Charlotte. That's all. [*She throws her shawl over PÍSHTCHIK, makes a curtsy and runs up into the drawing-room.*]

Pishtchik [*hurrying after her*]. You little rascal . . . there's a girl for you, there's a girl. . . . [*Exit!*]

Madame Ranévsky. And still no sign of Leoníd. What he's doing in the town so long, I can't understand. It must be all over by now; the property's sold; or the auction never came off; why does he keep me in suspense so long?

Barbara [*trying to soothe her*]. Uncle has bought it, I am sure of that.

Trophímof [*mockingly*]. Of course he has.

Barbara. Grannie sent him a power of attorney to buy it in her name and transfer the mortgage. She's done it for Ánya's sake. I'm perfectly sure that Heaven will help us and uncle will buy it.

Madame Ranévsky. Your Yaroslav grannie sent fifteen hundred pounds to buy the property in her name—she doesn't trust us—but it wouldn't be enough even to pay the interest. [*Covering her face with her hands.*] My fate is being decided to-day, my fate. . . .

Trophímof [*teasing BARBARA*]. Madame Lopákhin!

Barbara [*angrily*]. Perpetual Student! He's been sent down twice from the University.

Madame Ranévsky. Why do you get angry, Barbara? He calls you Madame Lopákhin for fun. Why not? You can marry Lopákhin if you like; he's a nice, interesting man; you

needn't if you don't; nobody wants to force you, my pet.

Barbara. I take it very seriously, mamma, I must confess. He's a nice man and I like him.

Madame Ranévsky. Then marry him. There's no good putting it off that I can see.

Barbara. But, mamma, I can't propose to him myself. For two whole years everybody's been talking about him to me, every one; but he either says nothing or makes a joke of it. I quite understand. He's making money; he's always busy; he can't be bothered with me. If I only had some money, even a little, even ten pounds, I would give everything up and go right away. I would go into a nunnery.

Trophimof [mocking]. What bliss!

Barbara [to *TROPHIMOF*]. A student ought to be intelligent. [*In a gentler voice, crying.*] How ugly you've grown, Peter; how old you've grown! [*She stops crying; to MADAME RANÉVSKY.*] But I can't live without work, mamma. I must have something to do every minute of the day.

[*Enter YÁSHA*]

Yásha [*trying not to laugh*]. Ephikhódof has broken a billiard cue. [*Exit.*]

Barbara. What's Ephikhódof doing here? Who gave him leave to play billiards? I don't understand these people. [*Exit.*]

Madame Ranévsky. Don't tease her, Peter. Don't you see that she's unhappy enough already?

Trophimof. I wish she wouldn't be so fussy, always meddling in other people's affairs. The whole summer she's given me and Ánya no peace; she is afraid we'll work up a romance between us. What business is it of hers? I'm sure I never gave her any grounds; I'm not likely to be so commonplace. We are above love!

Madame Ranévsky. Then I suppose I must be beneath love. [*Deeply agitated.*] Why doesn't Leoníd come? Oh, if only I knew whether the property's sold or not! It seems such an impossible disaster, that I don't know what to think. . . . I'm bewildered. . . . I shall burst out screaming, I shall do something idiotic. Save me, Peter; say something to me, say something. . . .

Trophimof. Whether the property is sold to-day or whether it's not sold, surely it's all one? It's all over with it long ago; there's no turning back; the path is overgrown. Be

calm, dear Lyubóf Andréyevna. You mustn't deceive yourself any longer; for once you must look the truth straight in the face.

Madame Ranévsky. What truth? You can see what's truth, and what's untruth, but I seem to have lost the power of vision; I see nothing. You settle every important question so boldly; but tell me, Peter, isn't that because you're young, because you have never solved any question of your own as yet by suffering? You look boldly ahead; isn't it only that you don't see or divine anything terrible in the future; because life is still hidden from your young eyes? You are bolder, honester, deeper than we are, but reflect, show me just a finger's breadth of consideration, take pity on me. Don't you see? I was born here, my father and mother lived here, and my grandfather; I love this house; without the cherry orchard my life has no meaning for me, and if it *must* be sold, then for Heaven's sake, sell me too! [*Embracing TROPHIMOF and kissing him on the forehead.*] My little boy was drowned here. [*Crying.*] Be gentle with me, dear, kind Peter.

Trophimof. You know I sympathize with all my heart.

Madame Ranévsky. Yes, yes, but you ought to say it somehow differently. [*Taking out her handkerchief and dropping a telegram.*] I am so wretched to-day, you can't imagine! All this noise jars on me, my heart jumps at every sound. I tremble all over; but I can't shut myself up; I am afraid of the silence when I'm alone. Don't be hard on me, Peter; I love you like a son. I would gladly let Ánya marry you, I swear it; but you must work, Peter; you must get your degree. You do nothing; Fate tosses you about from place to place; and that's not right. It's true what I say, isn't it? And you must do something to your beard to make it grow better. [*Laughing.*] I can't help laughing at you.

Trophimof [*picking up the telegram*]. I don't wish to be an Adonis.

Madame Ranévsky. It's a telegram from Paris. I get them every day. One came yesterday, another to-day. That savage is ill again; he's in a bad way. . . . He asks me to forgive him, he begs me to come; and I really ought to go to Paris and be with him. You look at me sternly; but what am I to do, Peter? What am I to do? He's ill, he's lonely, he's unhappy. Who is to look after him? Who is to keep him from doing stupid

things? Who is to give him his medicine when it's time? After all, why should I be ashamed to say it? I love him, that's plain. I love him. I love him. . . . My love is like a stone tied round my neck; it's dragging me down to the bottom; but I love my stone. I can't live without it. [*Squeezing TROPHÍMOF's hand.*] Don't think ill of me, Peter; don't say anything! Don't say anything!

Trophímov [*crying*]. Forgive my bluntness, for Heaven's sake; but the man has simply robbed you.

Madame Ranévsky. No, no, no! [*Stopping her ears.*] You mustn't say that!

Trophímov. He's a rascal; everybody sees it but yourself; he's a petty rascal, a ne'er-do-well . . .

Madame Ranévsky [*angry but restrained*]. You're twenty-six or twenty-seven, and you're still a Lower School boy!¹

Trophímov. Who cares?

Madame Ranévsky. You ought to be a man by now; at your age you ought to understand people who love. You ought to love some one yourself, you ought to be in love! [*Angrily.*] Yes, yes! It's not purity with you; it's simply you're a smug, a figure of fun, a freak. . . .

Trophímov [*horrified*]. What does she say?

Madame Ranévsky. "I am above love!" You're not above love; you're simply what *Firs* calls a "job-lot." At your age you ought to be ashamed not to have a mistress!

Trophímov [*aghast*]. This is awful! What does she say? [*Going quickly up into the drawing-room, clasping his head with his hands.*] This is something awful! I can't stand it; I'm off . . . [*Exit, but returns at once.*] All is over between us! [*Exit to landing.*]

Madame Ranévsky [*calling after him*]. Stop, Peter! Don't be ridiculous; I was only joking! Peter!

[*TROPHÍMOF is heard on the landing going quickly down the stairs, and suddenly falling down them with a crash. ÁNYA and BARBARA scream. A moment later the sound of laughter.*]

Madame Ranévsky. What has happened?
[*ÁNYA runs in.*]

Ánya [*laughing*]. Peter's tumbled downstairs. [*She runs out again.*]

Madame Ranévsky. What a ridiculous fellow he is!

[*The STATIONMASTER stands in the*

¹ Literally, a gymnasiast of the second form (from the bottom).

middle of the drawing-room beyond the arch and recites Alexey Tolstoy's poem, "The Sinner." Everybody stops to listen, but after a few lines the sound of a waltz is heard from the landing and he breaks off. All dance. TROPHÍMOF, ÁNYA, BARBARA, and MADAME RANÉVSKY enter from the landing.]

Madame Ranévsky. Come, Peter, come, you pure spirit. . . . I beg your pardon. Let's have a dance. [*She dances with TROPHÍMOF. ÁNYA and BARBARA dance.*]

[*Enter FIRS, and stands his walking-stick by the side door. Enter YÁSHA by the drawing-room; he stands looking at the dancers.*]

Yásha. Well, grandfather?

Firs. I'm not feeling well. In the old days it was generals and barons and admirals that danced at our dances, but now we send for the Postmaster and the Stationmaster, and even they make a favor of coming. I'm sort of weak all over. The old master, their grandfather, used to give us all sealing wax, when we had anything the matter. I've taken sealing wax every day for twenty years and more. Perhaps that's why I'm still alive.

Yásha. I'm sick of you, grandfather. [*Yawning.*] I wish you'd die and have done with it.

Firs. Ah! you . . . job-lot. [*He mumbles to himself.*]

[*TROPHÍMOF and MADAME RANÉVSKY dance beyond the arch and down into the sitting-room.*]

Madame Ranévsky. *Merci*. I'll sit down. [*Sitting.*] I'm tired.

[*Enter ÁNYA.*]

Ánya [*agitated*]. There was somebody in the kitchen just now saying that the cherry orchard was sold to-day.

Madame Ranévsky. Sold? Who to?

Ánya. He didn't say who to. He's gone. [*She dances with TROPHÍMOF. Both dance up into the drawing-room.*]

Yásha. It was some old fellow chattering; a stranger.

Firs. And still Leoníd Andréyitch doesn't come. He's wearing his light overcoat, *demi-saison*; he'll catch cold as like as not. Ah, young wood, green wood!

Madame Ranévsky. This is killing me. *Yásha*, go and find out who it was sold to.

Yásha. Why, he's gone long go, the old man. [*Laughs.*]

Madame Ranévsky [*vexed*]. What are you laughing at? What are you glad about?

Yásha. He's a ridiculous fellow is Ephikhódof. Nothing in him. Twenty-two misfortunes!

Madame Ranévsky. Firs, if the property is sold, where will you go to?

Firs. Wherever you tell me, there I'll go.

Madame Ranévsky. Why do you look like that? Are you ill? You ought to be in bed.

Firs [*ironically*]. Oh, yes, I'll go to bed, and who'll hand the things round, who'll give orders? I've the whole house on my hands.

Yásha. Lyubóf Andréyevna! Let me ask a favor of you; be so kind; if you go to Paris again, take me with you, I beseech you. It's absolutely impossible for me to stay here. [*Looking about; sotto voce.*] What's the use of talking? You can see for yourself this is a barbarous country; the people have no morals; and the boredom! The food in the kitchen is something shocking, and on the top of it old Firs going about mumbling irrelevant nonsense. Take me back with you; be so kind!

[*Enter PíshTCHIK.*]

PíshTchik. May I have the pleasure . . . a bit of a waltz, charming lady? [MADAME RANÉVSKY takes his arm.] All the same, enchanting lady, you must let me have eighteen pounds. [*Dancing.*] Let me have . . . eighteen pounds. [*Exeunt dancing through the arch.*]

Yásha [*singing to himself*].

"Oh, wilt thou understand

The turmoil of my soul?"

[*Beyond the arch appears a figure in gray tall hat and check trousers, jumping and waving its arms. Cries of "Bravo, Charlotte Ivánovna."*]

Dunyásha [*stopping to powder her face*]. Mamselle Ánya tells me I'm to dance; there are so many gentlemen and so few ladies. But dancing makes me giddy and makes my heart beat, Firs Nikoláyevevitch; and just now the gentleman from the post-office said something so nice to me, oh, so nice! It quite took my breath away. [*The music stops.*]

Firs. What did he say to you?

Dunyásha. He said, "You are like a flower."

Yásha [*yawning*]. Cad! [*Exit.*]

Dunyásha. Like a flower! I am so lady-like and refined, I dote on compliments.

Firs. You'll come to a bad end.

[*Enter EPHIKHÓDOF.*]

Ephikhódof. You are not pleased to see me, Avdótya Fyódorovna, no more than if I were some sort of insect. [*Sighing.*] Ah! Life! Life!

Dunyásha. What do you want?

Ephikhódof. Undoubtedly perhaps you are right. [*Sighing.*] But of course, if one regards it, so to speak, from the point of view, if I may allow myself the expression, and with apologies for my frankness, you have finally reduced me to a state of mind. I quite appreciate my destiny; every day some misfortune happens to me, and I have long since grown accustomed to it, and face my fortune with a smile. You have passed your word to me, and although I . . .

Dunyásha. Let us talk of this another time, if you please; but now leave me in peace. I am busy meditating. [*Playing with her fan.*]

Ephikhódof. Every day some misfortune befalls me, and yet if I may venture to say so, I meet them with smiles and even laughter.

[*Enter BARBARA from the drawing-room.*]

Barbara [*to EPHIKHÓDOF*]. Haven't you gone yet, Simeon? You seem to pay no attention to what you're told. [*To DUNYÁSHA.*] You get out of here, Dunyásha. [*To EPHIKHÓDOF.*] First you play billiards and break a cue, and then you march about the drawing-room as if you were a guest!

Ephikhódof. Allow me to inform you that it's not your place to call me to account.

Barbara. I'm not calling you to account; I'm merely talking to you. All you can do is to walk about from one place to another, without ever doing a stroke of work; and why on earth we keep a clerk at all Heaven only knows.

Ephikhódof [*offended*]. Whether I work, or whether I walk, or whether I eat, or whether I play billiards is a question to be decided only by my elders and people who understand.

Barbara [*furious*]. How dare you talk to me like that! How dare you! I don't understand things, don't I? You clear out of here this minute! Do you hear me? This minute!

Ephikhódof [*flinching*]. I must beg you to express yourself in genteeler language.

Barbara [*beside herself*]. You clear out this instant second! Out you go! [*Following him as he retreats towards the door.*] Twenty-two misfortunes! Make yourself scarce! Get out of my sight! [*Exit EPHIKHÓDOF.*]

Ephikhódof [without]. I shall lodge a complaint against you.

Barbara. What! You're coming back, are you? [Seizing the walking-stick left at the door by FIRS.] Come on! Come on! Come on! I'll teach you! Are you coming? Are you coming? Then take that. [She slashes with the stick.]

[Enter LOPÁKHIN.]

Lopákhin. Many thanks; much obliged.

Barbara [still angry, but ironical]. Sorry!

Lopákhin. Don't mention it. I'm very grateful for your warm reception.

Barbara. It's not worth thanking me for. [She walks away, then looks round and asks in a gentle voice:] I didn't hurt you?

Lopákhin. Oh, no, nothing to matter. I shall have a bump like a goose's egg, that's all.

[Voices from the drawing-room: "Lopákhin has arrived! Yermolái Alexéyitch!"]

Pishtchik. Let my eyes see him, let my ears hear him! [He and LOPÁKHIN kiss.] You smell of brandy, old man. We're having a high time, too.

[Enter MADAME RANÉVSKY.]

Madame Ranévsky. Is it you, Yermolái Alexéyitch? Why have you been so long? Where is Leoníd?

Lopákhin. Leoníd Andréyitch came back with me. He's just coming.

Madame Ranévsky [agitated]. What happened? Did the sale come off? Tell me, tell me!

Lopákhin [embarrassed, afraid of showing his pleasure]. The sale was all over by four o'clock. We missed the train and had to wait till half-past eight. [Sighing heavily.] Ouf! I'm rather giddy. . . .

[Enter GÁYEF. In one hand he carries parcels; with the other he wipes away his tears.]

Madame Ranévsky. What happened, Lén-ya? Come, Lén-ya! [Impatiently, crying.] Be quick, be quick, for Heaven's sake!

Gáyef [answering her only with an up-and-down gesture of the hand; to FIRS, crying]. Here take these. . . . Here are some anchovies and Black Sea herrings. I've had nothing to eat all day. Lord, what I've been through! [Through the open door of the billiard-room comes the click of the billiard balls and YÁSHA's voice: "Seven, eighteen!" Gáyef's expression

changes; he stops crying.] I'm frightfully tired. Come and help me change, FIRS. [He goes up through the drawing-room, FIRS following.]

Pishtchik. What about the sale? Come on, tell us all about it.

Madame Ranévsky. Was the cherry orchard sold?

Lopákhin. Yes.

Madame Ranévsky. Who bought it?

Lopákhin. I did. [A pause. MADAME RANÉVSKY is overwhelmed at the news. She would fall to the ground but for the chair and table by her. BARBARA takes the keys from her belt, throws them on the floor in the middle of the sitting-room, and exit.] I bought it. Wait a bit; don't hurry me; my head's in a whirl; I can't speak. . . . [Laughing.] When we got to the sale, Derigánof was there already. Leoníd Andréyitch had only fifteen hundred pounds, and Derigánof bid three thousand more than the mortgage right away. When I saw how things stood, I went for him and did four thousand. He said four thousand five hundred. I said five thousand five hundred. He went up by five hundreds, you see, and I went up by thousands. . . . Well, it was soon over. I bid nine thousand more than the mortgage, and got it; and now the cherry orchard is mine! Mine! [Laughing.] Heavens alive! Just think of it! The cherry orchard is mine! Tell me that I'm drunk; tell me that I'm off my head; tell me that it's all a dream! . . . [Stamping his feet.] Don't laugh at me! If only my father and my grandfather could rise from their graves and see the whole affair, how their Yermolái, their flogged and ignorant Yermolái, who used to run about barefooted in the winter, how this same Yermolái had bought a property that hasn't its equal for beauty anywhere in the whole world! I have bought the property where my father and grandfather were slaves, where they weren't even allowed into the kitchen. I'm asleep, it's only a vision, it isn't real. . . . 'Tis the fruit of imagination, wrapped in the mists of ignorance. [Picking up the keys and smiling affectionately.] She's thrown down her keys; she wants to show that she's no longer mistress here. . . . [Jingling them together.] Well, well, what's the odds? [The musicians are heard tuning up.] Hey, musicians, play! I want to hear you. Come, every one, and see Yermolái Lopákhin lay his axe to the cherry orchard, come and see the trees fall down! We'll fill the place with

villas; our grandsons and great-grandsons shall see a new life here. . . . Strike up, music!

[*The band plays. MADAME RANÉVSKY sinks into a chair and weeps bitterly.*]

Lopákhin [*reproachfully*]. Oh, why, why didn't you listen to me? You can't put the clock back now, poor dear. [*Crying.*] Oh, that all this were past and over! Oh, that our unhappy topsy-turvy life were changed!

Pishtchik [*taking him by the arm, sotto voce*]. She's crying. Let's go into the drawing-room and leave her alone to . . . Come on.

[*Taking him by the arm, and going up toward the drawing-room.*]

Lopákhin. What's up? Play your best, musicians! Let everything be as I want. [*Ironically.*] Here comes the new squire, the owner of the cherry orchard! [*Knocking up by accident against a table and nearly throwing down the candelabra.*] Never mind, I can pay for everything!

[*Exit with PISHTCHIK. Nobody remains in the drawing-room or sitting-room except MADAME RANÉVSKY, who sits huddled together, weeping bitterly. The band plays softly.*]

[*Enter ÁNYA and TROPHÍMOF quickly. ÁNYA goes to her mother and kneels before her. TROPHÍMOF stands in the entry to the drawing-room.*]

Ánya. Mamma! Are you crying, mamma? My dear, good, sweet mamma! Darling, I love you! I bless you! The cherry orchard is sold; it's gone; it's quite true, it's quite true. But don't cry, mamma, you've still got life before you, you've still got your pure and lovely soul. Come with me, darling; come away from here. We'll plant a new garden, still lovelier than this. You will see it and understand, and happiness, deep, tranquil happiness will sink down on your soul, like the sun at eventide, and you'll smile, mamma. Come, darling, come with me!

ACT FOUR

Same scene as Act One. There are no window curtains, no pictures. The little furniture left is stacked in a corner, as if for sale. A feeling of emptiness. By the door to the hall and at the back of the scene are piled portmanteaux, bundles, etc. The door is open and the voices of BARBARA and ÁNYA are audible.

LOPÁKHIN stands waiting. YÁSHA holds a

tray with small tumblers full of champagne. EPIKHÓDOF is tying up a box in the hall. A distant murmur of voices behind the scene; the PEASANTS have come to say good-bye.

Gáyef [*without*]. Thank you, my lads, thank you.

Yásha. The common people have come to say good-bye. I'll tell you what I think, Yermolái Alexéyitch; they're good fellows but rather stupid.

[*The murmur of voices dies away.*]

[*Enter MADAME RANÉVSKY and GÁYEF from the hall. She is not crying, but she is pale, her face twitches, she cannot speak.*]

Gáyef. You gave them your purse, Lyuba. That was wrong, very wrong!

Madame Ranévsky. I couldn't help it, I couldn't help it!

[*Exeunt both.*]

Lopákhin [*calling after them through the doorway*]. Please come here! Won't you come here? Just a glass to say good-bye. I forgot to bring any from the town, and could only raise one bottle at the station. Come along. [*A pause.*] What, won't you have any? [*Returning from the door.*] If I'd known, I wouldn't have bought it. I shan't have any either. [*YÁSHA sets the tray down carefully on a chair.*] Drink it yourself, Yásha.

Yásha. Here's to our departure! Good luck to them that stay! [*Drinking.*] This isn't real champagne, you take my word for it.

Lopákhin. Sixteen shillings a bottle. [*A pause.*] It's devilish cold in here.

Yásha. The fires weren't lighted to-day; we're all going away. [*He laughs.*]

Lopákhin. What are you laughing for?

Yásha. Just pleasure.

Lopákhin. Here we are in October, but it's as calm and sunny as summer. Good building weather. [*Looking at his watch and speaking off.*] Don't forget that there's only forty-seven minutes before the train goes. You must start for the station in twenty minutes. Make haste.

[*Enter TROPHÍMOF in an overcoat, from out of doors.*]

TrophímoF. I think it's time we were off. The carriages are round. What the deuce has become of my goloshes? I've lost 'em. [*Calling off.*] Ánya, my goloshes have disappeared. I can't find them anywhere!

Lopákhin. I've got to go to Kharkof. I'll start in the same train with you. I'm going to spend the winter at Kharkof. I've been loafing about all this time with you people, eating my head off for want of work. I can't live without work, I don't know what to do with my hands; they dangle about as if they didn't belong to me.

Trophimof. Well, we're going now, and you'll be able to get back to your beneficent labors.

Lopákhin. Have a glass.

Trophimof. Not for me.

Lopákhin. Well, so you're off to Moscow?

Trophimof. Yes, I'll see them into the town, and go on to Moscow to-morrow.

Lopákhin. Well, well, . . . I suppose the professors haven't started their lectures yet; they're waiting till you arrive.

Trophimof. It's no affair of yours.

Lopákhin. How many years have you been up at the University?

Trophimof. Try and think of some new joke; this one's getting a bit flat. [*Looking for his goloshes.*] Look here, I dare say we shan't meet again, so let me give you a bit of advice as a keepsake: Don't flap your hands about! Get out of the habit of flapping. Building villas, prophesying that villa residents will turn into small freeholders, all that sort of thing is flapping, too. Well, when all's said and done, I like you. You have thin, delicate, artist fingers; you have a delicate artist soul.

Lopákhin [*embracing him*]. Good-bye, old chap. Thank you for everything. Take some money off me for the journey if you want it.

Trophimof. What for? I don't want it.

Lopákhin. But you haven't got any.

Trophimof. Yes, I have. Many thanks. I got some for a translation. Here it is, in my pocket. [*Anxiously.*] I can't find my goloshes anywhere!

Barbara [*from the next room*]. Here, take your garbage away! [*She throws a pair of goloshes on the stage.*]

Trophimof. What are you so cross about, Barbara? Humph! . . . But those aren't my goloshes!

Lopákhin. In the spring I sowed three thousand acres of poppy and I have cleared four thousand pounds net profit. When my poppies were in flower, what a picture they made! So you see, I cleared four thousand pounds; and I wanted to lend you a bit be-

cause I've got it to spare. What's the good of being stuck up? I'm a peasant. . . . As man to man . . .

Trophimof. Your father was a peasant; mine was a chemist; it doesn't prove anything. [*Lopákhin takes out his pocket-book with paper money.*] Shut up, shut up. . . . If you offered me twenty thousand pounds I would not take it. I am a free man; nothing that you value so highly, all of you, rich and poor, has the smallest power over me; it's like thistledown floating on the wind. I can do without you; I can go past you; I'm strong and proud. Mankind marches forward to the highest truth, to the highest happiness possible on earth, and I march in the foremost ranks.

Lopákhin. Will you get there?

Trophimof. Yes. [*A pause.*] I will get there myself, or I will show others the way.

[*The sound of axes hewing is heard in the distance.*]

Lopákhin. Well, good-bye, old chap; it is time to start. Here we stand swaggering to each other, and life goes by all the time without heeding us. When I work for hours without getting tired, I get easy in my mind and I seem to know why I exist. But God alone knows what most of the people in Russia were born for. . . . Well, who cares? It doesn't affect the circulation of work. They say Leoníd Andréyitch has got a place; he's going to be in a bank and get six hundred pounds a year. . . . He won't sit it out, he's too lazy.

Anyá [*in the doorway*]. Mamma says will you stop them cutting down the orchard till she has gone?

Trophimof. Really, haven't you got tact enough for that? [*Exit by the hall.*]

Lopákhin. Of course, I'll stop them at once.—What fools they are! [*Exit after TROPHIMOF.*]

Anyá. Has Firs been sent to the hospital?

Yásha. I told 'em this morning. They're sure to have sent him.

Anyá [*to EPHIKHÓDOF, who crosses.*] Simeon Panteléyitch, please find out if Firs has been sent to the hospital.

Yásha [*offended*]. I told George this morning. What's the good of asking a dozen times?

Ephikhódof. Our centenarian friend, in my conclusive opinion, is hardly worth tinkering; it's time he was despatched to his forefathers. I can only say I envy him. [*Putting-down a*

portmanteau on a bandbox and crushing it flat.]
There you are! I knew how it would be!
[Exit.]

Yásha [*jeering*]. Twenty-two misfortunes!
Barbara [*without*]. Has Firs been sent to
the hospital?

Ánya. Yes.

Barbara. Why didn't they take the note to
the doctor?

Ánya. We must send it after them. [Exit.]

Barbara [*from the next room*]. Where's
Yásha? Tell him his mother is here. She
wants to say good-bye to him.

Yásha [*with a gesture of impatience*]. It's
enough to try the patience of a saint!

[DUNYÁSHA has been busying herself
with the luggage. Seeing YÁSHA
alone, she approaches him.]

Dunyásha. You might just look once at
me, Yásha. You are going away, you are
leaving me. [*Crying and throwing her arms
round his neck.*]

Yásha. What's the good of crying? [*Drink-
ing champagne.*] In six days I shall be back
in Paris. To-morrow we take the express, off
we go, and that's the last of us! I can hardly
believe it's true. *Vive la France!* This place
don't suit me. I can't bear it . . . it can't be
helped. I have had enough barbarism; I'm
fed up. [*Drinking champagne.*] What's the
good of crying? You be a good girl, and you'll
have no call to cry.

Dunyásha [*powdering her face and looking
into a glass*]. Write me a letter from Paris.
I've been so fond of you, Yásha, ever so fond!
I am a delicate creature, Yásha.

Yásha. Here's somebody coming. [*He
busies himself with the luggage, singing under
his breath.*]

[Enter MADAME RANÉVSKY, GÁYEF,
ÁNYA, and CHARLOTTE.]

Gáyef. We'll have to be off; it's nearly
time. [*Looking at YÁSHA.*] Who is it smells of
red herring?

Madame Ranévsky. We must take our seats
in ten minutes. [*Looking round the room.*]
Good-bye, dear old house; good-bye, grand-
papa! When winter is past and spring comes
again, you will be here no more; they will
have pulled you down. Oh, think of all these
walls have seen! [*Kissing ÁNYA passionately.*]
My treasure, you look radiant, your eyes
flash like two diamonds. Are you happy?—
very happy?

Ánya. Very, very happy. We're beginning
a new life, mamma.

Gáyef [*gayly*]. She's quite right; every-
thing's all right now. Till the cherry orchard
was sold we were all agitated and miserable;
but once the thing was settled finally and
irrevocably, we all calmed down and got
jolly again. I'm a bank clerk now; I'm a
financier . . . red in the middle! And you,
Lyuba, whatever you may say, you're looking
ever so much better, not a doubt about it.

Madame Ranévsky. Yes, my nerves are
better; it's quite true. [*She is helped on with
her hat and coat.*] I sleep well now. Take my
things out, Yásha. We must be off. [*To
ÁNYA.*] We shall soon meet again, darling.
. . . I'm off to Paris; I shall live on the money
your grandmother sent from Yaroslav to buy
the property. God bless your grandmother!
I'm afraid it won't last long.

Ánya. You'll come back very, very soon,
won't you, mamma? I'm going to work and
pass the examination at the Gymnase and
get a place and help you. We'll read all sorts
of books together, won't we, mamma? [*Kiss-
ing her mother's hands.*] We'll read in the long
autumn evenings, we'll read heaps of books,
and a new, wonderful world will open up
before us. [*Meditating.*] . . . Come back,
mamma!

Madame Ranévsky. I'll come back, my
angel. [*Embracing her.*]

[Enter LOPÁKHIN. CHARLOTTE sings
softly.]

Gáyef. Happy Charlotte, she's singing.

Charlotte [*taking a bundle of rags, like a
swaddled baby*]. Hush-a-bye, baby, on the
tree-top . . . [*The baby answers, "Wah, wah."*]
Hush, my little one, hush, my pretty one!
["Wah, wah."] You'll break your mother's
heart. [*She throws the bundle down on the floor
again.*] Don't forget to find me a new place,
please. I can't do without it.

Lopákhin. We'll find you a place, Char-
lotte Ivánovna, don't be afraid.

Gáyef. Everybody's deserting us. Bar-
bara's going. Nobody seems to want us.

Charlotte. There's nowhere for me to live
in town. I'm obliged to go. [*Hums a tune.*]
What's the odds?

[Enter PÍSHTCHIK.]

Lopákhin. Nature's masterpiece!

Pishtchik [*painting*]. Oy, oy, let me get my
breath again! . . . I'm done up! . . . My noble
friends! . . . Give me some water.

Gáyef. Wants some money, I suppose. No, thank you; I'll keep out of harm's way. [*Exit.*]

Pishtchik. It's ages since I have been here, fairest lady. [*To LOPÁKHIN.*] You here? Glad to see you, you man of gigantic intellect. Take this; it's for you. [*Giving LOPÁKHIN money.*] Forty pounds! I still owe you eighty-four.

Lopákhin [*amazed, shrugging his shoulders.*] It's like a thing in a dream! Where did you get it from?

Pishtchik. Wait a bit. . . . I'm hot. . . . A most remarkable thing! Some Englishmen came and found some sort of white clay on my land. [*To MADAME RANÉVSKY.*] And here's forty pounds for you, lovely, wonderful lady. [*Giving her money.*] The rest another time. [*Drinking water.*] Only just now a young man in the train was saying that some . . . some great philosopher advises us all to jump off roofs. . . . Jump, he says, and there's an end of it. [*With an astonished air.*] Just think of that! More water!

Lopákhin. Who were the Englishmen?

Pishtchik. I leased them the plot with the clay on it for twenty-four years. But I haven't any time now . . . I must be getting on. I must go to Znoikof's, to Kardamónof's. . . . I owe everybody money. [*Drinking.*] Good-bye to every one; I'll look in on Thursday.

Madame Ranévsky. We're just moving into town, and to-morrow I go abroad.

Pishtchik. What! [*Alarmed.*] What are you going into town for? Why, what's happened to the furniture? . . . Trunks? . . . Oh, it's all right. [*Crying.*] It's all right. People of powerful intellect . . . those Englishmen. It's all right. Be happy . . . God be with you . . . it's all right. Everything in this world has to come to an end. [*Kissing MADAME RANÉVSKY'S hand.*] If ever the news reaches you that I have come to an end, give a thought to the old . . . horse, and say, "Once there lived a certain Simeónof-Pishtchik, Heaven rest his soul." . . . Remarkable weather we're having. . . . Yes. . . . [*Goes out deeply moved. Returns at once and says from the doorway.*] Dáshenka sent her compliments. [*Exit.*]

Madame Ranévsky. Now we can go. I have only two things on my mind. One is poor old Firs. [*Looking at her watch.*] We can still stay five minutes.

Ánya. Firs has been sent to the hospital

already, mamma. Yásha sent him off this morning.

Madame Ranévsky. My second anxiety is Barbara. She's used to getting up early and working, and now that she has no work to do she's like a fish out of water. She has grown thin and pale and taken to crying, poor dear. . . . [*A pause.*] You know very well, Yermolái Alexéyitch, I always hoped . . . to see her married to you, and as far as I can see, you're looking out for a wife. [*She whispers to ÁNYA, who nods to CHARLOTTE, and both exeunt.*] She loves you; you like her; and I can't make out why you seem to fight shy of each other. I don't understand it.

Lopákhin. I don't understand it either, to tell you the truth. It all seems so odd. If there's still time I'll do it this moment. Let's get it over and have done with it; without you there, I feel as if I should never propose to her.

Madame Ranévsky. A capital idea! After all, it doesn't take more than a minute. I'll call her at once.

Lopákhin. And here's the champagne all ready. [*Looking at the glasses.*] Empty; some one's drunk it. [*YÁSHA coughs.*] That's what they call lapping it up and no mistake!

Madame Ranévsky [*animated*]. Capital! We'll all go away. . . . *Allez, Yásha.* I'll call her. [*At the door.*] Barbara, leave all that and come here. Come along!

[*Exeunt MADAME RANÉVSKY and YÁSHA.*]

Lopákhin [*looking at his watch*]. Yes.

[*A pause. A stifled laugh behind the door; whispering; at last enter BARBARA.*]

Barbara [*examining the luggage*]. Very odd; I can't find it anywhere . . .

Lopákhin. What are you looking for?

Barbara. I packed it myself, and can't remember. [*A pause.*]

Lopákhin. Where are you going to-day, Varvára Mikháilovna?

Barbara. Me? I'm going to the Ragulins. I'm engaged to go and keep house for them, to be housekeeper or whatever it is.

Lopákhin. Oh, at Yáshnevo? That's about fifty miles from here. [*A pause.*] Well, so life in this house is over now.

Barbara [*looking at the luggage*]. Wherever can it be? Perhaps I put it in the trunk. . . . Yes, life here is over now; there won't be any more . . .

Lopákhin. And I'm off to Kharkof at once . . . by the same train. A lot of business to do. I'm leaving Ephikhódof to look after this place. I've taken him on.

Barbara. Have you?

Lopákhin. At this time last year snow was falling already, if you remember; but now it's fine and sunny. Still, it's cold for all that. Three degrees of frost.

Barbara. Were there? I didn't look. [A pause.] Besides, the thermometer's broken. [A pause.]

A Voice [at the outer door]. Yermolái Alexéyitch!

Lopákhin [as if he had only been waiting to be called]. I'm just coming! [Exit quickly.]

[BARBARA sits on the floor, puts her head on a bundle and sobs softly. The door opens and MADAME RANÉVSKY comes in cautiously.]

Madame Ranévsky. Well? [A pause.] We must be off.

Barbara [no longer crying, wiping her eyes]. Yes, it's time, mamma. I shall get to the Ragulins all right to-day, so long as I don't miss the train.

Madame Ranévsky [calling off]. Put on your things, Ánya.

[Enter ÁNYA, then GÁYEF and CHARLOTTE.

GÁYEF wears a warm overcoat with a hood. The servants and drivers come in. EPHIKHÓDOF busies himself about the luggage.]

Madame Ranévsky. Now we can start on our journey.

ÁNYA [delighted]. We can start on our journey!

Gáyef. My friends, my dear, beloved friends! Now that I am leaving this house forever, can I keep silence? Can I refrain from expressing those emotions which fill my whole being at such a moment?

Ánya [pleadingly]. Uncle!

Barbara. Uncle, what's the good?

Gáyef [sadly]. Double the red in the middle pocket. I'll hold my tongue.

[Enter TROPHÍMOF, then LOPÁKHIN.]

Trophímof. Come along, it's time to start. *Lopákhin.* Ephikhódof, my coat.

Madame Ranévsky. I must sit here another minute. It's just as if I had never noticed before what the walls and ceilings of the house were like. I look at them hungrily, with such tender love . . .

Gáyef. I remember, when I was six years

old, how I sat in this window on Trinity Sunday, and watched father starting out for church.

Madame Ranévsky. Has everything been cleared out?

Lopákhin. Apparently everything. [To EPHIKHÓDOF, putting on his overcoat.] See that everything's in order, Ephikhódof.

Ephikhódof [in a hoarse voice]. You trust me, Yermolái Alexéyitch.

Lopákhin. What's up with your voice?

Ephikhódof. I was just having a drink of water. I swallowed something.

Yásha [contemptuously]. Cad!

Madame Ranévsky. We're going, and not a soul will be left here.

Lopákhin. Until the spring.

[BARBARA pulls an umbrella out of a bundle of rugs, as if she were brandishing it to strike. LOPÁKHIN pretends to be frightened.]

Barbara. Don't be so silly! I never thought of such a thing.

Trophímof. Come, we'd better go and get in. It's time to start. The train will be in immediately.

Barbara. There are your goloshes, Peter, by that portmanteau. [Crying.] What dirty old things they are!

Trophímof [putting on his goloshes]. Come along.

Gáyef [much moved, afraid of crying]. The train . . . the station . . . double the red in the middle; doublette to pot the white in the corner.¹ . . .

Madame Ranévsky. Come on!

Lopákhin. Is every one here? No one left in there? [Locking the door.] There are things stacked in there; I must lock them up. Come on!

Ánya. Good-bye, house! Good-bye, old life!

Trophímof. Welcome, new life! [Exit with ÁNYA. BARBARA looks round the room, and exit slowly. Exeunt YÁSHA and CHARLOTTE with her dog.]

Lopákhin. Till the spring, then. Go on, everybody. So-long! [Exit.]

[MADAME RANÉVSKY and GÁYEF remain alone. They seem to have been waiting for this, throw their arms round

¹ If you make your ball hit the cushion and run across into a pocket, it is a double; if I hit the cushion myself and pot you on the rebound, it is a doublette.

each other's necks and sob restrainedly and gently, afraid of being overheard.]

Gáyef [in despair]. My sister! my sister!

Madame Ranévsky. Oh, my dear, sweet, lovely orchard! My life, my youth, my happiness, farewell! Farewell!

Ánya [calling gayly, without]. Mamma!

Trophímof [gay and excited]. Aoo!

Madame Ranévsky. One last look at the walls and the windows. . . . Our dear mother used to love to walk up and down this room.

Gáyef. My sister! my sister!

Ánya [without]. Mamma!

Trophímof [without]. Aoo!

Madame Ranévsky. We're coming.

[Exeunt. The stage is empty. One hears all the doors being locked, and the carriages driving away. All is quiet. Amid the silence the thud of the axes on the trees echoes sad and lonely. The sound of footsteps. FIRS appears in the doorway, right. He is dressed, as

always, in his long coat and white waistcoat; he wears slippers. He is ill.]

Firs [going to the door, left, and trying the handle]. Locked. They've gone. [Sitting on the sofa.] They've forgotten me. Never mind! I'll sit here. Leoníd Andréyitch is sure to put on his cloth coat instead of his fur. [He sighs anxiously.] He hadn't me to see. Young wood, green wood! [He mumbles something incomprehensible.] Life has gone by as if I'd never lived. [Lying down.] I'll lie down. There's no strength left in you; there's nothing, nothing. Ah, you . . . job-lot!

[He lies motionless. A distant sound is heard, as if from the sky, the sound of a string breaking, dying away, melancholy. Silence ensues, broken only by the stroke of the axe on the trees far away in the cherry orchard.]

THE END

RIDERS TO THE SEA

By J. M. SYNGE

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JOHN MILLINGTON SYNGE AND THE IRISH NATIONAL THEATRE

ALTHOUGH Ireland has given the English drama some of its most prominent authors—Farquhar, Goldsmith, Boucicault, Wilde, and Shaw—it is not surprising that she had no dramatic tradition of her own until the turn of the twentieth century, for Ireland was little more than a British colony. In the 1890's, however, the various efforts to awaken Irish national spirit and to achieve independence from England came to a head. The Irish, as Yeats said, were at that stage in their history where the imagination, shaped by stirring events, desired dramatic expression. The Irish Literary Theatre, which was to become the famous Abbey Theatre Company, was organized in response to this desire by William Butler Yeats, Lady Augusta Gregory, Edward Martyn, and George Moore with, later, the assistance of the Fay brothers and Miss A. E. F. Horniman. The announced intention of the group was to tell the people of their own life, or of the life of poetry where every man can see his own image. To this end, their strongest assistance came from John Millington Synge.

Synge, who had been born in a Dublin suburb in 1871, was typical of the young Irish intellectuals of the late nineteenth century. After graduation from Trinity College, he took himself first to Germany and then to Paris, where, in the company of other expatriates, he attempted to earn a living as a journalist. In 1898, Yeats discovered him and urged him to return to Ireland and take up a career as a serious artist. Synge did so, going not to Dublin but to the Aran Islands where he lived among the peasants and drew inspiration from their wild imaginings and racy phrases. The story has often been told of his listening through a chink in the floor to the chatter of serving-maids in the inn kitchen below. "In countries," he wrote, "where the imagination of the people, and the language they use, is rich and living, it is possible for a writer to be rich and copious in his words, and at the same time to give the reality, which is the root of all poetry, in a comprehensive and natural form."

His first play, *In the Shadow of the Glen*, was produced in 1903, and established not only the characteristics of all his works, but the pattern of their reception by the audience. The play is concerned with peasants, with a typical folk-story situation, written in language "as fully flavored as a nut or apple." The reaction of the audience was so violently disapproving as to require police protection for the actors. The riot was politically inspired and soon quelled; a later riot, attending the premier of *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907), was less easily subdued, pursuing the play even on the Abbey's visit to America, where potatoes were frequently flung on the stage.

Riders to the Sea was produced without disturbance. In its brief act, Synge has written the finest of all folk dramas, and perhaps the purest example of modern tragedy. Indeed, it is very near to the great classical concept of tragedy, the lifelong struggle of the protagonist against a natural force too great for her, her final defeat, and acceptance. Writing in terms of a simple peasant family, Synge has none the less achieved the universal quality necessary for enduring drama. Maurya's tragedy is one in which we can all participate; she is humanity in its ceaseless struggle for existence.

That Maurya is an ignorant peasant woman instead of a hero of rank and achievement, and that the forces of her defeat are natural (the sea) rather than the supernatural (fate, the gods), is only a greater tribute to Synge's achievement. With great economy of means and great richness of language, he has written a play which, in spite of endless reproductions under all sorts of conditions, still has power to move an audience beyond, perhaps, any other play of the last century.

Riders to the Sea was first performed at the Molesworth Hall, Dublin, in 1904, with Honor Lavelle as Maurya, W. G. Fay as Bartley, and Sara Allgood as Cathleen.

CHARACTERS

MAURYA, *an old woman*

BARTLEY, *her son*

CATHLEEN, *her daughter*

NORA, *a younger daughter*

MEN AND WOMEN

RIDERS TO THE SEA

SCENE—*An Island off the West of Ireland. Cottage kitchen, with nets, oil-skins, spinning wheel, some new boards standing by the wall, etc.* CATHLEEN, a girl of about twenty, finishes kneading cake, and puts it down in the pot-oven by the fire; then wipes her hands, and begins to spin at the wheel. NORA, a young girl, puts her head in at the door.

Nora [in a low voice]. Where is she?

Cathleen. She's lying down, God help her, and may be sleeping, if she's able.

[NORA comes in softly, and takes a bundle from under her shawl]

Cathleen [spinning the wheel rapidly]. What is it you have?

Nora. The young priest is after bringing them. It's a shirt and a plain stocking were got off a drowned man in Donegal.

[CATHLEEN stops her wheel with a sudden movement, and leans out to listen]

Nora. We're to find out if it's Michael's they are, some time herself will be down looking by the sea.

Cathleen. How would they be Michael's, Nora. How would he go the length of that way to the far north?

Nora. The young priest says he's known the like of it. "If it's Michael's they are," says he, "you can tell herself he's got a clean burial by the grace of God, and if they're not his, let no one say a word about them, for she'll be getting her death," says he, "with crying and lamenting."

[The door which NORA half closed is blown open by a gust of wind]

Cathleen [looking out anxiously]. Did you ask him would he stop Bartley going this day with the horses to the Galway fair?

Nora. "I won't stop him," says he, "but let you not be afraid. Herself does be saying prayers half through the night, and the Almighty God won't leave her destitute," says he, "with no son living."

Cathleen. Is the sea bad by the white rocks, Nora?

Nora. Middling bad, God help us. There's a great roaring in the west, and it's worse it'll be getting when the tide's turned

to the wind. [She goes over to the table with the bundle] Shall I open it now?

Cathleen. Maybe she'd wake up on us, and come in before we'd done. [Coming to the table] It's a long time we'll be, and the two of us crying.

Nora [goes to the inner door and listens] She's moving about on the bed. She'll be coming in a minute.

Cathleen. Give me the ladder, and I'll put them up in the turf-loft, the way she won't know of them at all, and maybe when the tide turns she'll be going down to see would he be floating from the east.

[They put the ladder against the gable of the chimney; CATHLEEN goes up a few steps and hides the bundle in the turf-loft. MAURYA comes from the inner room]

Maurya [looking up at CATHLEEN and speaking querulously]. Isn't it turf enough you have for this day and evening?

Cathleen. There's a cake baking at the fire for a short space [throwing down the turf] and Bartley will want it when the tide turns if he goes to Connemara.

[NORA picks up the turf and puts it round the pot-oven]

Maurya [sitting down on a stool at the fire]. He won't go this day with the wind rising from the south and west. He won't go this day, for the young priest will stop him surely.

Nora. He'll not stop him, mother, and I heard Eamon Simon and Stephen Pheety and Colum Shawn saying he would go.

Maurya. Where is he himself?

Nora. He went down to see would there be another boat sailing in the week, and I'm thinking it won't be long till he's here now, for the tide's turning at the green head, and the hooker's tacking from the east.

Cathleen. I hear some one passing the big stones.

Nora [looking out]. He's coming now, and he in a hurry.

Bartley [comes in and looks round the room; speaking sadly and quietly]. Where is the bit of new rope, Cathleen, was bought in Connemara?

Cathleen [coming down]. Give it to him, Nora; it's on a nail by the white boards. I hung it up this morning, for the pig with the black feet was eating it.

Nora [giving him a rope]. Is that it, Bartley?

Maurya. You'd do right to leave that rope, Bartley, hanging by the boards. [*BARTLEY takes the rope*] It will be wanting in this place, I'm telling you, if Michael is washed up tomorrow morning, or the next morning, or any morning in the week, for it's a deep grave we'll make him by the grace of God.

Bartley [beginning to work with the rope]. I've no halter the way I can ride down on the mare, and I must go now quickly. This is the one boat going for two weeks or beyond it, and the fair will be a good fair for horses I heard them saying below.

Maurya. It's a hard thing they'll be saying below if the body is washed up and there's no man in it to make the coffin, and I after giving a big price for the finest white boards you'd find in Connemara.

[*She looks round at the boards*]

Bartley. How would it be washed up, and we after looking each day for nine days, and a strong wind blowing a while back from the west and south?

Maurya. If it wasn't found itself, that wind is raising the sea, and there was a star up against the moon, and it rising in the night. If it was a hundred horses, or a thousand horses you had itself, what is the price of a thousand horses against a son where there is one son only?

Bartley [working at the halter, to CATHLEEN]. Let you go down each day, and see the sheep aren't jumping in on the rye, and if the jobber comes you can sell the pig with the black feet if there is a good price going.

Maurya. How would the like of her get a good price for a pig?

Bartley [to CATHLEEN]. If the west wind holds with the last bit of the moon let you and Nora get up weed enough for another cock for the kelp. It's hard set we'll be from this day with no one in it but one man to work.

Maurya. It's hard set we'll be surely the day you're drown'd with the rest. What way will I live and the girls with me, and I an old woman looking for the grave?

[*BARTLEY lays down the halter, takes off his old coat, and puts on a newer one of the same flannel*]

Bartley [to NORA]. Is she coming to the pier?

Nora [looking out]. She's passing the green head and letting fall her sails.

Bartley [getting his purse and tobacco]. I'll have half an hour to go down, and you'll see me coming again in two days, or in three days, or maybe in four days if the wind is bad.

Maurya [turning round to the fire, and putting her shawl over her head]. Isn't it a hard and cruel man won't hear a word from an old woman, and she holding him from the sea?

Cathleen. It's the life of a young man to be going on the sea, and who would listen to an old woman with one thing and she saying it over?

Bartley [taking the halter]. I must go now quickly. I'll ride down on the red mare, and the gray pony'll run behind me. . . . The blessing of God on you.

[*He goes out*]

Maurya [crying out as he is in the door]. He's gone now, God spare us, and we'll not see him again. He's gone now, and when the black night is falling I'll have no son left me in the world.

Cathleen. Why wouldn't you give him your blessing and he looking round in the door? Isn't it sorrow enough is on every one in this house without your sending him out with an unlucky word behind him, and a hard word in his ear?

[*MAURYA takes up the tongs and begins raking the fire aimlessly without looking round*]

Nora [turning towards her]. You're taking away the turf from the cake.

Cathleen [crying out]. The Son of God forgive us, Nora, we're after forgetting his bit of bread.

[*She comes over to the fire*]

Nora. And it's destroyed he'll be going till dark night, and he after eating nothing since the sun went up.

Cathleen [turning the cake out of the oven]. It's destroyed he'll be, surely. There's no sense left on any person in a house where an old woman will be talking for ever.

[*MAURYA sways herself on her stool*]

Cathleen [cutting off some of the bread

and rolling it in a cloth; to MAURYA]. Let you go down now to the spring well and give him this and he passing. You'll see him then and the dark word will be broken, and you can say "God speed you," the way he'll be easy in his mind.

Maurya [taking the bread]. Will I be in it as soon as himself?

Cathleen. If you go now quickly.

Maurya [standing up unsteadily]. It's hard set I am to walk.

Cathleen [looking at her anxiously]. Give her the stick, Nora, or maybe she'll slip on the big stones.

Nora. What stick?

Cathleen. The stick Michael brought from Connemara.

Maurya [taking a stick NORA gives her]. In the big world the old people do be leaving things after them for their sons and children, but in this place it is the young men do be leaving things behind for them that do be old.

[She goes out slowly]

[NORA goes over to the ladder]

Cathleen. Wait, Nora, maybe she'd turn back quickly. She's that sorry, God help her, you wouldn't know the thing she'd do.

Nora. Is she gone round by the bush?

Cathleen [looking out]. She's gone now. Throw it down quickly, for the Lord knows when she'll be out of it again.

Nora [getting the bundle from the loft]. The young priest said he'd be passing tomorrow, and we might go down and speak to him below if it's Michael's they are surely.

Cathleen [taking the bundle]. Did he say what way they were found?

Nora [coming down]. "There were two men," says he, "and they rowing round with poteen before the cocks crowed, and the oar of one of them caught the body, and they passing the black cliffs of the north."

Cathleen [trying to open the bundle]. Give me a knife, Nora, the string's perished with the salt water, and there's a black knot on it you wouldn't loosen in a week.

Nora [giving her a knife]. I've heard tell it was a long way to Donegal.

Cathleen [cutting the string]. It is surely. There was a man in here a while ago—the man sold us that knife—and he said if you set off walking from the rocks beyond, it would be seven days you'd be in Donegal.

Nora. And what time would a man take, and he floating?

[CATHLEEN opens the bundle and takes out a bit of a stocking. They look at them eagerly]

Cathleen [in a low voice]. The Lord spare us, Nora! isn't it a queer hard thing to say if it's his they are surely?

Nora. I'll get his shirt off the hook the way we can put the one flannel on the other. [She looks through some clothes hanging in the corner] It's not with them, Cathleen, and where will it be?

Cathleen. I'm thinking Bartley put it on him in the morning, for his own shirt was heavy with the salt in it [pointing to the corner]. There's a bit of a sleeve was of the same stuff. Give me that and it will do.

[NORA brings it to her and they compare the flannel]

Cathleen. It's the same stuff, Nora; but if it is itself aren't there great rolls of it in the shops of Galway, and isn't it many another man may have a shirt of it as well as Michael himself?

Nora [who has taken up the stocking and counted the stitches, crying out]. It's Michael, Cathleen, it's Michael; God spare his soul, and what will herself say when she hears this story, and Bartley on the sea?

Cathleen [taking the stocking]. It's a plain stocking.

Nora. It's the second one of the third pair I knitted, and I put up three score stitches, and I dropped four of them.

Cathleen [counts the stitches]. It's that number is in it. [Crying out] Ah, Nora, isn't it a bitter thing to think of him floating that way to the far north, and no one to keen him but the black hags that do be flying on the sea?

Nora [swinging herself round, and throwing out her arms on the clothes]. And isn't it a pitiful thing when there is nothing left of a man who was a great rower and fisher, but a bit of an old shirt and a plain stocking?

Cathleen [after an instant]. Tell me is herself coming, Nora? I hear a little sound on the path.

Nora [looking out]. She is, Cathleen. She's coming up to the door.

Cathleen. Put these things away before she'll come in. Maybe it's easier she'll be after giving her blessing to Bartley, and we

won't let on we've heard anything the time he's on the sea.

Nora [helping CATHLEEN to close the bundle]. We'll put them here in the corner.

[They put them into a hole in the chimney corner. CATHLEEN goes back to the spinning-wheel]

Nora. Will she see it was crying I was?

Cathleen. Keep your back to the door the way the light'll not be on you.

[NORA sits down at the chimney corner, with her back to the door. MAURYA comes in very slowly, without looking at the girls, and goes over to her stool at the other side of the fire. The cloth with the bread is still in her hand. The girls look at each other, and NORA points to the bundle of bread]

Cathleen [after spinning for a moment]. You didn't give him his bit of bread?

[MAURYA begins to keen softly, without turning round]

Cathleen. Did you see him riding down?

[MAURYA goes on keening]

Cathleen [a little impatiently]. God forgive you; isn't it a better thing to raise your voice and tell what you seen, than to be making lamentation for a thing that's done? Did you see Bartley, I'm saying to you?

Maurya [with a weak voice]. My heart's broken from this day.

Cathleen [as before]. Did you see Bartley?

Maurya. I seen the fearfulest thing.

Cathleen [leaves her wheel and looks out]. God forgive you; he's riding the mare now over the green head, and the gray pony behind him.

Maurya [starts, so that her shawl falls back from her head and shows her white tossed hair; with a frightened voice]. The gray pony behind him.

Cathleen [coming to the fire]. What is it ails you, at all?

Maurya [speaking very slowly]. I've seen the fearfulest thing any person has seen, since the day Bride Dara seen the dead man with the child in his arms.

Cathleen and Nora. Uah.

[They crouch down in front of the old woman at the fire]

Nora. Tell us what it is you seen.

Maurya. I went down to the spring well, and I stood there saying a prayer to myself. Then Bartley came along, and he riding on the red mare with the gray pony be-

hind him. *[She puts up her hands, as if to hide something from her eyes]* The Son of God spare us, Nora!

Cathleen. What is it you seen.

Maurya. I seen Michael himself.

Cathleen [speaking softly]. You did not, mother. It wasn't Michael you seen, for his body is after being found in the far north, and he's got a clean burial by the grace of God.

Maurya [a little defiantly]. I'm after seeing him this day, and he riding and galloping. Bartley came first on the red mare; and I tried to say "God speed you," but something choked the words in my throat. He went by quickly; and "the blessing of God on you," says he, and I could say nothing. I looked up then, and I was crying, at the gray pony, and there was Michael upon it—with fine clothes on him, and new shoes on his feet.

Cathleen [begins to keen]. It's destroyed we are from this day. It's destroyed, surely.

Nora. Didn't the young priest say the Almighty God wouldn't leave her destitute with no son living?

Maurya [in a low voice, but clearly]. It's little the like of him knows of the sea. . . . Bartley will be lost now, and let you call in Eamon and make me a good coffin out of the white boards, for I won't live after them. I've had a husband, and a husband's father, and six sons in this house—six fine men, though it was a hard birth I had with every one of them and they coming to the world—and some of them were found and some of them were not found, but they're gone now the lot of them. . . . There were Stephen, and Shawn, were lost in the great wind, and found after in the Bay of Gregory of the Golden Mouth, and carried up the two of them on the one plank, and in by that door.

[She pauses for a moment, the girls start as if they heard something through the door that is half open behind them]

Nora [in a whisper]. Did you hear that, Cathleen? Did you hear a noise in the north-east?

Cathleen [in a whisper]. There's some one after crying out by the seashore.

Maurya [continues without hearing anything]. There was Sheamus and his father. and his own father again, were lost in a dark night, and not a stick or sign was seen of

them when the sun went up. There was Patch after was drowned out of a curagh that turned over. I was sitting here with Bartley, and he a baby, lying on my two knees, and I seen two women, and three women, and four women coming in, and they crossing themselves, and not saying a word. I looked out then, and there were men coming after them, and they holding a thing in the half of a red sail, and water dripping out of it—it was a dry day, Nora—and leaving a track to the door.

[She pauses again with her hand stretched out towards the door. It opens softly and old women begin to come in, crossing themselves on the threshold, and kneeling down in front of the stage with red petticoats over their heads]

Maurya *[half in a dream, to CATHLEEN]*. Is it Patch, or Michael, or what is it at all?

Cathleen. Michael is after being found in the far north, and when he is found there how could he be here in this place?

Maurya. There does be a power of young men floating round in the sea, and what way would they know if it was Michael they had, or another man like him, for when a man is nine days in the sea, and the wind blowing, it's hard set his own mother would be to say what man was it.

Cathleen. It's Michael, God spare him, for they're after sending us a bit of his clothes from the far north.

[She reaches out and hands MAURYA the clothes that belonged to MICHAEL.]

MAURYA stands up slowly, and takes them in her hands. NORA looks out]

Nora. They're carrying a thing among them and there's water dripping out of it and leaving a track by the big stones.

Cathleen *[in a whisper to the women who have come in]*. Is it Bartley it is?

One of the Women. It is surely, God rest his soul.

[Two younger women come in and pull out the table. Then men carry in the body of BARTLEY, laid on a plank, with a bit of a sail over it, and lay it on the table]

Cathleen *[to the women, as they are doing so]*. What way was he drowned?

One of the Women. The gray pony knocked him into the sea, and he was washed out where there is a great surf on the white rocks.

[MAURYA has gone over and knelt down at the head of the table. The women are keening softly and swaying themselves with a slow movement. CATHLEEN and NORA kneel at the other end of the table. The men kneel near the door]

Maurya *[raising her head and speaking as if she did not see the people around her]*. They're all gone now, and there isn't anything more the sea can do to me. . . . I'll have no call now to be up crying and praying when the wind breaks from the south, and you can hear the surf is in the east, and the surf is in the west, making a great stir with the two noises, and they hitting one on the other. I'll have no call now to be going down and getting Holy Water in the dark nights after Samhain, and I won't care what way the sea is when the other women will be keening. *[To NORA]* Give me the Holy Water, Nora, there's a small sup still on the dresser.

[NORA gives it to her]

Maurya *[drops MICHAEL's clothes across BARTLEY's feet, and sprinkles the Holy Water over him]*. It isn't that I haven't prayed for you, Bartley, to the Almighty God. It isn't that I haven't said prayers in the dark night till you wouldn't know what I'd be saying; but it's a great rest I'll have now, and it's time surely. It's a great rest I'll have now, and great sleeping in the long nights after Samhain, if it's only a bit of wet flour we do have to eat, and maybe a fish that would be stinking.

[She kneels down again, crossing herself, and saying prayers under her breath]

Cathleen *[to an old man]*. Maybe yourself and Eamon would make a coffin when the sun rises. We have fine white boards herself bought, God help her, thinking Michael would be found, and I have a new cake you can eat while you'll be working.

The Old Man *[looking at the boards]*. Are there nails with them?

Cathleen. There are not, Colum; we didn't think of the nails.

Another Man. It's a great wonder she wouldn't think of the nails, and all the coffin she's seen made already.

Cathleen. It's getting old she is, and broken.

[MAURYA stands up again very slowly and spreads out the pieces of Mi-

CHAE'L's clothes beside the body, sprinkling them with the last of the Holy Water]

Nora [in a whisper to CATHLEEN]. She's quiet now and easy; but the day Michael was drowned you could hear her crying out from this to the spring well. It's fonder she was of Michael, and would any one have thought that?

Cathleen [slowly and clearly]. An old woman will be soon tired with anything she will do, and isn't it nine days herself is after crying and keening, and making great sorrow in the house?

Maurya [puts the empty cup mouth downwards on the table, and lays her hands together on BARTLEY's feet]. They're all together this time, and the end is come. May the Almighty God have mercy on Bartley's

soul, and on Michael's soul, and on the souls of Sheamus and Patch, and Stephen and Shawn [bending her head]; and may He have mercy on my soul, Nora, and on the soul of every one is left living in the world.

[She pauses, and the keen rises a little more loudly from the women, then sinks away]

Maurya [continuing]. Michael has a clean burial in the far north, by the grace of the Almighty God. Bartley will have a fine coffin out of the white boards, and a deep grave surely. What more can we want than that? No man at all can be living for ever, and we must be satisfied.

[She kneels down again and the curtain falls slowly]

THE END

THE THUNDERBOLT

By ARTHUR W. PINERO

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ARTHUR W. PINERO AND HIS PLAYS

ARTHUR WING PINERO was born in London in 1855. He studied law in his father's office, but soon found that profession uncongenial, and, when he was nineteen years old, became an actor. A year later he began to write plays in one act to serve as curtain-raisers, and soon he was writing longer plays that began to establish his reputation. He left the stage, and for fifty years gave his time to playwriting. He was knighted by King Edward VII in 1909, and died in 1934.

For at least twenty years, say from 1890 to 1910, Pinero shared with Henry Arthur Jones the leadership of English drama. His formerly immense prestige has now yielded to what seems undue depreciation. It is said that he seemed great only in the light of the poverty of English drama a generation ago and that he was never more than a clever technician. Such depreciation is surely unjustifiable. Though Pinero is perhaps not a great dramatist, he is a very considerable one even when compared with Shaw, Galsworthy, Barrie, Granville-Barker, and others, who have overshadowed him.

Within his long career Pinero wrote forty-one long plays and ten plays in one act, and perfected a technique in many kinds of drama. To be a master craftsman is no small achievement, however patronizing may be the present-day attitude toward the "mere technician." Such technique as Pinero's is not easily acquired, and cannot be acquired at all except by a dramatist of rare and genuine capacity. Such a farce as *The Magistrate*, such a comedy of sentiment as *Trelawny of the "Wells,"* such a comedy of manners as *The Gay Lord Quex*, such an ironic comedy as *The Thunderbolt*, such a serious play of character as *Iris*, such a tragedy as *Mid-Channel*, hold their own even in the light of the authentic and varied product of Pinero's younger contemporaries.

Aside from the intrinsic merit of his best plays, Pinero is significant as the chief influence in the introduction of the modern spirit in English drama. With Jones, he was the first to feel and exemplify the influence of Ibsen. He represented an effort to use the actual material of human life as the stuff of drama, to present it sincerely, and to evolve a technique consonant with this matter and this purpose. His *Profligate* (1889) was the first English play to discard the soliloquy and the aside. His *Second Mrs. Tanqueray* (1893) was the first strikingly successful problem play on the English stage.

It is true that Pinero had little that is new to tell of human nature. His characters are sometimes mere types; rarely are they distinguished or especially interesting. Yet his range of characterization was remarkably wide; and often he created a character entirely real and convincing. Such are *Iris*, Zöe Blundell in *Mid-Channel*, Letty, Sophie Fulgarney in *The Gay Lord Quex*, and most of the characters in *The Thunderbolt*. His style, although usually adequate, generally lacked the final distinction of great writing. He was capable, even in his later plays, of stilted, pseudo-literary dialogue—such speech as never was spoken by mortal man—or woman, either. But at its best his style is natural and appropriate, is flexible and varied, and often possesses humor, wit, and point.

Each one of his plays, which depict many phases of English life, creates a special atmosphere, in which his persons live and move and have their being. He built various little complete and self-consistent worlds. In general he avoided mere theatricality, though sometimes he catered to his audience by introducing matter extraneous to the theme of the play and its necessities; such, for instance, as the slight love-story, as well as the two charming but incredible children, in *The Thunderbolt*.

Though both *Iris* and *Mid-Channel* are more moving plays; though *The Gay Lord Quex* is theatrically more effective, *The Thunderbolt* is, all things considered, Pinero's masterpiece. Its story is probable; its persons are real; its action is purely the outcome of character; its humor is inherent in its persons and its situations; its technique, including most of its dialogue, is admirable. The maker of such a play cannot, without an affront to common-sense, be termed a "mere technician."

The Thunderbolt was first produced in London, on May 9, 1908. It was first produced in New York on November 12, 1910, at the New Theatre.

CHARACTERS

JAMES MORTIMORE
ANN, *his wife*
STEPHEN MORTIMORE
LOUISA, *his wife*
THADDEUS MORTIMORE
PHYLLIS, *his wife*
JOYCE } *The Thaddeus Mortimores' children*
CYRIL }
COLONEL PONTING
ROSE, *his wife, née Mortimore*
HELEN THORNHILL
THE REV. GEORGE TRIST
MR. VALLANCE, *solicitor, of Singlehampton*
MR. ELKIN, *solicitor, of Linchpool*
MR. DENYER, *a house-agent*
HEATH, *a man-servant*
A servant girl at "Nelson Villas"
Two servant girls at "Ivanhoe"

The action takes place at the present day in Linchpool, a city of the Midlands, and in the town of Singlehampton

THE THUNDERBOLT

ACT ONE

A large, oblong room, situated on the ground floor and furnished as a library, in the residence of the late Edward Mortimore, in Linchpool.

At the back are three sashed windows, slightly recessed, with venetian blinds. There is a chair in each recess. At the further end of the right-hand wall a door opens from the hall, the remaining part of the wall being occupied by a long dwarf-bookcase. This bookcase finishes at each end with a cupboard, and on the top of each cupboard stands a lamp. The keys of the cupboards are in their locks.

On the left-hand side of the room, in the middle of the wall, is a fireplace with a fender-stool before it, and on either side of the fireplace there is a tall bookcase with glazed doors. A high-backed armchair faces the fireplace at the further end. A smoking-table with the usual accessories, a chair, and a settee stand at the nearer end of the fireplace, a few feet from the wall.

Almost in the centre of the room there is a big knee-hole writing-table with a lamp upon it. On the further side of the table is a writing-chair. Another chair stands beside the table.

On the right, near the dwarf-bookcase, there is a circular library-table on which are strewn books, newspapers, and magazines. Round this table a settee and three chairs are arranged.

The furniture and decorations, without exhibiting any special refinement of taste, are rich and massive.

The venetian blinds are down, and the room is in semi-darkness. What light there is proceeds from the bright sunshine visible through the slats.

Seated about the room, as if waiting for somebody to arrive, are JAMES and ANN MORTIMORE, STEPHEN and LOUISA, THADDEUS and PHYLLIS, and COLONEL PONTING and ROSE. The ladies are wearing their hats and gloves. Everybody is in the sort of black which people hurriedly muster while regular mourning is in the making—in the case of the MORTIMORES, the black being

added to apparel of a less sombre kind. All speak in subdued voices.

Rose [a lady of forty-four, fashionably dressed and coiffured and with a suspiciously blooming complexion—on the settee on the left, fanning herself]. Oh, the heat! I'm stifled.

Louisa [on the right—forty-six, a spare, thin-voiced woman]. Mayn't we have a window open?

Ann [beside the writing-table—a stolid, corpulent woman of fifty]. I don't think we ought to have a window open.

James [at the writing-table—a burly, thick-set man, a little older than his wife, with iron-gray hair and beard and a crape band round his sleeve]. Phew! Why not, mother?

Ann. It isn't usual in a house of mourning—except in the room where the—

Ponting [in the armchair before the fireplace—fifty-five, short, stout, apoplectic]. Rubbish! [Dabbing his brow]. I beg your pardon—it's like the Black Hole of Calcutta.

Thaddeus [rising from the settee on the right, where he is sitting with PHYLLIS—a meek, care-worn man of two-and-forty]. Shall I open one a little way?

Stephen [on the further side of the library-table—forty-nine, bald, stooping, with red rims to his eyes, wearing spectacles]. Do, Tad.

[THADDEUS goes to the window on the right and opens it]

Thaddeus [from behind the venetian blind]. Here's a fly.

James [taking out his watch as he rises]. That'll be Crake. Half-past eleven. He's in good time.

Thaddeus [looking into the street]. It isn't Crake. It's a young fellow.

James. Young fellow?

Thaddeus [emerging]. It's Crake's partner.

James. His partner?

Stephen. Crake has sent Vallance.

James. What's he done that for? Why hasn't he come himself? This young man doesn't know anything about our family.

Ann. He'll know the law, James.

James. Oh, the law's clear enough, mother.

[After a short silence, HEATH, a middle-aged manservant, appears, followed by VALLANCE. VALLANCE is a young man of about five-and-thirty]

Heath. Mr. Vallance.

Jan. : [advancing to VALLANCE as HEATH retires]. Good-morning.

Vallance. Good-morning. [Inquiringly] Mr. Mortimore?

James. James Mortimore.

Vallance. Mr. Crake had your telegram yesterday evening.

James. Yes, he answered it, telling us to expect him.

Vallance. He's obliged to go to London on business. He's very sorry. He thought I'd better run through.

James. Oh, well—glad to see you. [Introducing the others] My wife. My sister Rose—Mrs. Ponting. My sister-in-law, Mrs. Stephen Mortimore. My sister-in-law, Mrs. Thaddeus. My brother Stephen.

Stephen [rising]. Mr. Vallance was pointed out to me at the Institute the other night. [Shaking hands with VALLANCE] You left by the eight forty-seven?

Vallance. Yes, I changed at Mirtlesfield.

James. Colonel Ponting—my brother-in-law.

[PONTING, who has risen, nods to VALLANCE and joins ROSE]

My younger brother, Thaddeus.

Thaddeus [having moved away to the left]. How d'ye do?

James [putting VALLANCE into the chair before the writing-table and switching on the light of the lamp]. You sit yourself down there. [To everybody] Who's to be spokesman?

Stephen [joining LOUISA]. Oh, you explain matters, Jim.

[LOUISA makes way for STEPHEN, transferring herself to another chair so that her husband may be nearer VALLANCE]

James [to PONTING]. Colonel?

Ponting [sitting by ROSE]. Certainly; you do the talking, Mortimore.

James [sitting, in the middle of the room, astride a chair, which he fetches from the window on the right]. Well, Mr. Vallance, the reason we wired you yesterday—wired Mr. Crake, rather—asking him to meet us here this morning, is this. Something has happened here in Linchpool which makes

it necessary for us to obtain a little legal assistance.

Vallance. Yes?

James. Not that we anticipate legal difficulties, whichever way the affair shapes. At the same time, we consider it advisable that we should be represented by our own solicitor—a solicitor who has our interests at heart, and nobody's interests but ours. [Looking round] Isn't that it?

Stephen. We want our interests watched—our interests exclusively.

Ponting. Watched—that's it. I'm speaking for my wife, of course.

Rose [with a languid drawl]. Yes, watched. We should like our interests watched.

James [to VALLANCE]. These are the facts. I'll start with a bit of history. We Mortimores are one of the oldest, and, I'm bold enough to say, one of the most respected, families in Singlehampton. You're a newcomer to the town; so I'm obliged to tell you things I shouldn't have to tell Crake, who's been the family's solicitor for years. Four generations of Mortimores—I'm not counting our youngsters, who make a fifth—four generations of Mortimores have been born in Singlehampton, and the majority of 'em have earned their daily bread there.

Vallance. Indeed?

James. Yes, sir, indeed. Now, then. [Pointing to the writing-table] Writing-paper's in the middle drawer.

[VALLANCE takes a sheet of paper from the drawer and arranges it before him] My dear father and mother—both passed away—had five children, four sons and a daughter. I'm the second son; then comes Stephen; then Rose—Mrs. Colonel Ponting; then Thaddeus. You see us all round you.

Vallance [selecting a pen]. Five children, you said?

James. Five. The eldest of us was Ned—Edward—

Stephen. Edward Thomas Mortimore.

James. Edward cut himself adrift from Singlehampton six-and-twenty years ago. He died at a quarter-past three yesterday morning.

Stephen. Up-stairs.

James. We're in his house.

Stephen. We lay him to rest in the cemetery here on Monday.

Vallance [sympathetically]. I was read-

ing in the train, in one of the Linchpool papers—

James. Oh, they've got it in all their papers.

Vallance. Mr. Mortimore, the brewer?

James. The same. Aye, he was a big man in Linchpool.

Stephen. A very big man.

James. And, what's more, a very wealthy one; there's no doubt about that. Well, we can't find a will, Mr. Vallance.

Vallance. Really?

James. To all appearances, my brother's left no will—died intestate.

Vallance. Unmarried?

James. Unmarried; a bachelor. Now, then, sir—just to satisfy my good lady—in the event of no will cropping up, what becomes of my poor brother's property?

Vallance. It depends upon what the estate consists of. As much of it as is real estate would go to the heir-at-law—in this instance, the eldest surviving brother.

Ponting [*impatiently*]. Yes, yes; but it's all personal estate—personal estate, every bit of it.

James [*to VALLANCE*]. The Colonel's right. It's personal estate entirely, so we gather. The Colonel and I were pumping Elkin's managing-clerk about it this morning.

Vallance, Elkin?

James. Elkin, Son, and Tullis.

Stephen. Mr. Elkin has acted as my poor brother's solicitor for the last fifteen years.

James. And he's never made a will for Ned.

Stephen. Nor heard my brother mention the existence of one.

James [*to VALLANCE*]. Well? In the case of personal estate—?

Vallance. In that case, equal division between next-of-kin.

James. That's us—me, and my brothers, and my sister?

Vallance. Yes.

James [*to ANN*]. What did I tell you, Ann? [*To the rest*] What did I tell everybody?

[STEPHEN polishes his spectacles, and PONTING pulls at his moustache, vigorously. ROSE, ANN, and LOUISA resettle themselves in their seats with great contentment]

Vallance [*writing*]. "Edward"—[*looking up*] Thomas? [JAMES nods] "Thomas—Mortimore—"

James. Of 3 Cannon Row and Horton Lane—

Stephen. Horton Lane is where the brewery is.

James. Linchpool, brewer.

Stephen. "Gentleman" is the more correct description. The business was converted into a company in nineteen-hundred-and-four.

Louisa. Gentleman, ah! What a gentlemanly man he was!

Ann. A perfect gentleman in every respect.

Rose. Most gentlemanlike, poor dear thing.

Ponting. Must have been. I never saw him—but must have been.

James [*to VALLANCE*]. Gentleman, deceased—

Stephen. Died, June the twentieth—

James. Aged fifty-three. Two years my senior.

Vallance [*with due mournfulness*]. No older? [*Writing*] You are James—

James. James Henry. "Ivanhoe," Claybrook Road, and Victoria Yard, Singlehampton, builder and contractor.

Ann. My husband is a parish guardian and a rural-district councilman.

James. Never mind that, mother.

Ann. Eight years treasurer of the Institute, and one of the founders of the Singlehampton and Claybrook Temperance League.

Louisa. Stephen was one of the founders of the League, too—weren't you, Stephen?

James [*to VALLANCE*]. Stephen Philip Mortimore, 11 The Crescent, and 32 King Street, Singlehampton, printer and publisher; editor and proprietor of our Singlehampton *Times and Mirror*.

Louisa. Author of the History of Singlehampton and its Surroundings—

Stephen. All right, Lou.

Louisa. With Ordnance Map.

James. Rose Emily Rackstraw Ponting—

Rose. My mother was a Rackstraw.

James. Wife of Arthur Everard Ponting, West Sussex Regiment, Colonel, retired, 17a Coningsby Place, South Belgravia, London. That's the lot.

Ann. No—

James. Oh, there's Tad. [*To VALLANCE*] Thaddeus John Mortimore—

[THADDEUS is standing, looking on, with his elbows resting upon the back of the chair before the fireplace]

Thaddeus. Don't forget-me, Jim.

James. 6 Nelson Villas, Singlehampton, professor of music. Any further particulars, Mr. Vallance?

Vallance [*finishing writing and leaning back in his chair*]. May I ask, Mr. Mortimore, what terms you and your sister and brothers were on with the late Mr. Mortimore?

James. Terms?

Vallance. What I mean is, your late brother was a man of more than ordinary intelligence; he must have known who his estate would benefit, in the event of his dying intestate.

James [*with a nod*]. Aye.

Vallance. My point is, was he on such terms with you as to make it reasonably probable that he should have desired his estate to pass to those who are here?

James [*rubbing his beard*]. Reasonably probable?

Stephen. Certainly.

Ponting. In my opinion, certainly.

James [*looking at the others*]. He sent for us when he was near his end—

Stephen. Showing that old sores were healed—thoroughly healed—as far as he was concerned.

Vallance. Old sores?

James. He wouldn't have done that if he hadn't had a fondness for his family—eh?

Ann. Of course not.

Louisa. Of course he wouldn't.

Ponting. Quite so.

Vallance. Then, I take it, there had been—er—?

Stephen. An estrangement. Yes, there *had*.

James. Oh, I'm not one for keeping anything in the background. Up to a day or two before his death, we hadn't been on what you'd call terms with my brother for many years, Mr. Vallance.

Stephen. Unhappily.

James. *De Mortuis*—how's it go—?

Stephen. *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*.

James. Well, plain English is good enough for me. [*To VALLANCE*] But I don't attempt to deny it—at one time of his life my poor brother Edward was a bit of a scamp, sir.

Stephen. A little rackets—a little wild. Young men will be young men.

Ann [*shaking her head*]. I've a grown-up son myself.

Louisa [*inconsequently*]. And there are two sides to every question. I always say—don't I, Stephen—?

Stephen. Yes, yes, yes.

Louisa. There are two sides to every question.

James [*to VALLANCE*]. No, sir, after Edward cleared out of Singlehampton, we didn't see him again, any of us, till about fifteen years back. Then he came to settle here, in this city, and bought Cordingley's brewery.

Louisa. Only forty miles away from his birthplace.

Stephen. Forty-two miles.

Louisa. That was fate.

Stephen. Chance.

Louisa. I don't know the difference between chance and fate.

Stephen [*irritably*]. No, you don't, Lou.

James. Then some of us used to knock up against him occasionally—generally on the line, at Mirtlesfield junction. But it was only a nod, or a how-d'ye-do, we got from him; and it never struck us till last Tuesday morning that he kept a soft corner in his heart for us all.

Vallance. Tuesday—?

Ann. First post.

James. We had a letter from Elkin, telling us that poor Ned was seriously ill; and saying that he was willing to shake hands with the principal members of the family, if they chose to come through to Linchpool.

Stephen. Thank God we came.

James. Aye, thank God.

Ann and Louisa. Thank God.

Rose [*affectedly*]. It will always be a sorrow to me that I didn't get down till it was too late. I shall never cease to reproach myself.

James [*indulgently*]. Oh, well, you're a woman o' fashion, Rose.

Rose [*with a simper*]. Still, if I had guessed the end was as near as it was, I'd have given up my social engagements without a murmur. [*Appealing to PONTING*] Toby—!

Ponting. Without a murmur—without a murmur; both of us would.

Vallance [*rising, putting his notes into his pocketbook as he speaks*]. I think it would perhaps be as well that I should meet Mr. Elkin.

Stephen. That's the plan.

[*JAMES and PONTING rise*]

James. Just what I was going to propose.

Stephen. Elkin knows we have communicated with our solicitor.

James [looking at his watch]. He's gone around to the Safe Deposit Company in Lemon Street.

Stephen. His latest idea is that my brother may have rented a safe there.

Ponting. Preposterous. Never heard anything more grotesque.

James. The old gentleman will want to drag the river Linch next.

Ponting. As if a man of wealth and position, with safes and strong-rooms of his own, would deposit his will in a place of that sort. 'Pon my word, it's outrageous of Elkin.

Stephen. It does seem rather extravagant.

Rose. Absurd.

Vallance [coming forward]. We must remember that it's the duty of all concerned to use every possible means of discovery. [To JAMES] Your brother had an office at the brewery?

James. Elkin and I turned that inside-out yesterday.

Stephen. In the presence of Mr. Holt and Mr. Friswell, two of the directors.

Vallance. And his bank—?

James. London City and Midland. Four tin boxes. We've been through 'em.

Stephen. The most likely place of deposit, I should have thought, was the safe in this room.

Ponting. Exactly. The will would have been there if there had been a will at all.

[JAMES switches on the light of the lamp which stands above the cupboard at the further end of the dwarf-bookcase]

James [opening the cupboard and revealing a safe]. Yes, this is where my brother's private papers are.

Stephen. This was his library and sanctum.

James [listening as he shuts the cupboard door]. Hallo! [Opening the room door a few inches and peering into the hall] Here is Elkin.

[There is a slight general movement denoting intense interest and suspense.

ANN gets to her feet. JAMES closes the door and comes forward a little—grimly]

Well! Hey! I wonder whether he's found anything in Lemon Street?

Ponting [clutching ROSE's shoulder and dropping back into his chair—under his breath]. Good God!

Ann [staring at her husband]. James—! James [sternly]. Go and sit down, mother.

[ANN retreats and seats herself beside ROSE]

If he has, we ought to feel glad; that's how we ought to feel.

Stephen [resentfully]. Of course we ought. That's how we shall feel.

James. Poor old Ned! It's his wishes we've got to consider—[returning to the door] his wishes. [Opening the door again] Come in, Mr. Elkin. Waiting for you, sir.

[He admits ELKIN, who is a gray-haired, elderly man of sixty. He presents VALLANCE]

Mr. Vallance—Crake and Vallance, Singlehampton, our solicitors.

[ELKIN advances and shakes hands with VALLANCE]

Mr. Vallance has just run over to see how we're getting on.

Elkin [to VALLANCE, genially]. I don't go often to Singlehampton nowadays. I recollect the time, Mr. Vallance, when the whole of the south side of the town was meadow-land. Would you believe it—meadow-land! And where they've built the new hospital, old Dicky Dunn, the farmer, used to graze his cattle.

[JAMES touches his sleeve. He turns to JAMES.]

Eh?

James [rather huskily]. Excuse me. Any luck?

Elkin. Luck?

James. In Lemon Street. Find anything?

Elkin [shaking his head]. No. There is nothing there in your brother's name.

[Again there is a general movement, but this time of relief]

It was worth trying.

James. Oh, it was worth trying.

Stephen [heartily]. Everything's worth trying.

Ponting [jumping up]. Everything. Mustn't leave a stone unturned.

[The strain being over, ROSE and ANN rise and go to the fireplace, where PONTING joins them. THADDEUS moves away and seats himself at the centre window]

Elkin [sitting beside the writing-table]. This is a puzzling state of affairs, Mr. Vallance.

Vallance. Oh, come, Mr. Elkin!

Elkin. I don't want to appear uncivil to these ladies and gentlemen—very puzzling.

Vallance. Scarcely what one would have expected, perhaps; but what is there that's puzzling about it?

James [*standing by ELKIN*]. People have died intestate before to-day, Mr. Elkin.

Stephen. It's a common enough occurrence.

Vallance [*to ELKIN*]. I understand you acted for the late Mr. Mortimer for a great many years?

Elkin. Ever since he came to Linchpool.

Vallance. His most prosperous years.

[*ELKIN assents silently*]

James. When he was making money to leave.

Vallance [*to ELKIN*]. And the subject of a will was never broached between you?

Elkin. I won't say that. I've thrown out a hint or two at different times.

Vallance. Without any response on his part?

Elkin. Without any practical response, I admit.

[*JAMES and STEPHEN shrug their shoulders*]

But he must have employed other solicitors previous to my connection with him. I can't trace his having done so; but no commercial man gets to eight-and-thirty without having something to do with us chaps.

Vallance [*sitting on the settee on the left*]. Assuming a will of long standing, he may have destroyed it, may he not, recently?

Elkin. Recently?

Vallance. Quite recently. Here we have a man at variance with his family and dangerously ill. What do we find him doing? We find him summoning his relatives to his bedside and becoming reconciled to them—

James. Completely reconciled.

Stephen. Completely.

Elkin [*to VALLANCE*]. At my persuasion. I put pressure on him to send for his belongings.

Vallance. Indeed? Granting that, isn't it reasonable to suppose that, subsequent to this reconciliation—?

Elkin. Oh, no: he destroyed no document of any description after he took to his bed. That I've ascertained.

Vallance. Well, theorizing is of no use, is it? We have to deal with the simple fact, Mr. Elkin.

James. Yes, that's all we have to deal with.

Stephen. The simple fact.

Elkin. No will.

[*PONTING, with the rest, has been following the conversation between ELKIN and VALLANCE*]

Ponting. No will.

Elkin [*after a pause*]. Do you know, Mr. Vallance, there is one thing I shouldn't have been unprepared for?

Vallance. What?

Elkin. A will drawn by another solicitor, behind my back, during my association with Mr. Mortimore.

Vallance. Behind your back?

Elkin. He was a most attractive creature—one of the most engaging and one of the ablest, I've ever come across; but he was remarkably secretive with me in matters relating to his private affairs—remarkably secretive.

Vallance. Secretive?

Elkin. Reserved, if you like. Why, it wasn't till a few days before his death—last Saturday—it wasn't till last Saturday that he first spoke to me about this child of his.

Vallance. Child?

Elkin. This young lady we are going to see presently.

Vallance [*looking at JAMES and STEPHEN*]. Oh, I—I haven't heard anything of her.

Elkin. Bless me, haven't you been told?

James [*uncomfortably*]. We hadn't got as far as that with Mr. Vallance.

Stephen [*clearing his throat*]. Mr. Elkin did not think fit to inform us of her existence till yesterday.

James [*looking at his watch*]. Twelve o'clock she's due, isn't she?

Elkin [*to JAMES*]. You fixed the hour. [*To VALLANCE*] I wrote to her at the same time that I communicated with his brothers. Unfortunately, she was away, visiting.

Stephen. She's studying painting at one of these art-schools in Paris.

Elkin. She arrived late last night. Mrs. Elkin and I received her. Only four-and-twenty. A nice girl.

Vallance. Is the mother living?

Elkin. No.

James. The mother was a person of the name of Thornhill.

Stephen. Calling herself Thornhill—some

woman in London. She died when the child was quite small.

James [with a jerk of the head towards the safe]. There's a bundle of the mother's letters in the safe.

Elkin. This meeting with the family is my arranging. As matters stand, Miss Thornhill is absolutely unprovided for, Mr. Vallance. And there was the utmost affection between Mr. Mortimore and his daughter—as he acknowledged her to be—undoubtedly. Now you won't grumble at me for my use of the word "puzzling"?

Vallance [looking round]. I am sure my clients, should the responsibility ultimately rest with them, will do what is just and fitting with regard to the young lady.

James. More than just—more than just, if it's left to me.

Stephen. We should be only too anxious to behave in a liberal manner, Mr. Vallance.

Louisa. We're parents ourselves—all except Colonel and Mrs. Ponting.

Ann. My own girl—my Cissy—is nearly four-and-twenty.

Rose [seated upon the fender-stool]. I suppose we should have to make her an allowance of sorts, shouldn't we?

James. A monthly allowance.

Stephen. Monthly or quarterly.

Ponting. Yes, but this art-school in Paris—you've no conception what that kind of fun runs into.

James. Schooling doesn't go on forever, Colonel.

Ponting. But it'll lead to an atelier—a studio—if you're not careful.

Rose. The art-school could be dropped, surely?

Stephen. Perhaps the art-school isn't strictly necessary.

Rose. And she has an address in a most expensive quarter of Paris—didn't you say, Jim?

James. The Colonel says it's a swell locality.

Ponting. Most expensive. The father—if he was her father—seems to have squandered money on her.

Stephen. Well, well, we shall see what's to be done.

Ponting. Squandered money on her recklessly.

James. Yes, yes, we'll see, Colonel; we'll see.

[PHYLLIS, who has taken no part in

what has been going on, suddenly rises. She is a woman of thirty-five, white-faced and faded, but with decided traces of beauty. Everybody looks at her in surprise]

Phyllis [falteringly]. I—I beg your pardon—

Louisa [startled]. Good gracious me, Phyllis!

Phyllis [gaining firmness as she proceeds]. I beg your pardon. With every respect for Rose and Colonel Ponting, if we come into Edward Mortimore's money, we mustn't let it make an atom of difference to the child.

Louisa. Really, Phyllis!

Stephen [stiffly]. My dear Phyllis—

James [half amused, half contemptuously]. Oh, we mustn't, mustn't we, Phyllis?

Phyllis. He was awfully devoted to her in his lifetime, it turns out. Colonel Ponting and Rose ought to remember that.

Ponting [walking away in umbrage to the window on the left, followed by Rose]. Thank you, Mrs. Thaddeus.

Thaddeus [having risen and come to the writing-table]. Phyl—Phyl—

Phyllis [to JAMES and STEPHEN]. Jim—Stephen—you couldn't stint the girl after pocketing your brother's money; you couldn't do it!

Ann. James—

James. Eh, mother?

Ann. I don't think we need to be taught our duty by Phyllis.

Stephen [rising and going over to the fireplace]. Frankly, I don't think we need.

Louisa [following him]. Before Mr. Elkin and Mr. Vallance!

Thaddeus. Stephen—Lou—you don't understand Phyl.

James. It isn't for want of plain speaking, Tad.

Thaddeus [sitting at the writing-table]. No, but listen—Jim—

James [joining those at the fireplace]. Blessed if I've ever been spoken to in this style in my life!

Thaddeus. Jim, listen. If we come into Ned's money, we come into his debts into the bargain. There are no assets without liabilities. The girl's a debt—a big debt, as it were. Well, what does she cost? Five hundred a year? Six—seven—eight hundred a year? What's it matter? What would a thousand a year matter? Whatever Ned

could afford, we could, amongst us. Why he should have neglected to make Miss Thornhill independent is a mystery—I'm with you there, Mr. Elkin. Perhaps his sending for us, and shaking hands with us as he did, was his way of giving her into our charge. Heaven knows what was in his mind. But this is certain—if it falls to our lot to administer to Ned's estate, we administer, not only to the money, but to the girl, and the art-school, and her comfortable lodgings, and anything else in reason. There's nothing offensive in our saying this.

Elkin. Not in the least.

Thaddeus [with a deprecating little laugh]. Ha! We don't often put our ear into family discussions, Phyl and I. Stephen—[turning in his chair] Rosie—

James [looking down on Thaddeus—grinning]. Hallo, Tad! Why, I've always had the credit of being the speaker o' the family. You're developing all of a sudden.

[HEATH enters]

Heath [looking round the room]. Mrs. Thaddeus Mortimore—?

Thaddeus [pointing to PHYLLIS]. Here she is.

Heath [in a hushed voice]. Two young ladies from Roper's, to fit Mrs. Thaddeus Mortimore with her mourning.

Thaddeus [rising]. They weren't ready for Phyllis at ten o'clock. [Over his shoulder, as he joins PHYLLIS at the door] Hope you don't object to their waiting on her here.

Heath [to THADDEUS]. On the first floor, sir.

[PHYLLIS and THADDEUS go out. HEATH is following them]

Vallance [to HEATH, rising]. Er— [To ELKIN] What's his name?

Elkin [calling]. Heath!

[HEATH returns]

Vallance [going to HEATH]. Have you a room where Mr. Elkin and I can be alone for a few minutes?

Heath. There's the dining-room, sir.

Vallance [turning to ELKIN]. Shall we have a little talk together?

Elkin [rising]. By all means.

Vallance [to the others]. Will you excuse us?

Elkin [taking VALLANCE'S arm]. Come along. [Passing out with VALLANCE—regretfully] Ah, Heath, the dining-room . . . !

Heath [as he disappears, closing the door]. Yes, Mr. Elkin; that's over, sir.

[JAMES has crossed over to the right to watch the withdrawal of ELKIN and VALLANCE]

James. What have those two got to say to each other on the quiet in such a deuce of a hurry?

Ponting [coming forward]. My dear good friends, I beg you won't think me too presuming . . .

James [sourly]. What is it, Colonel?

Ponting. But you mustn't, you really mustn't, allow yourselves to be dictated to—bullied—

James. Bullied?

Ponting. Into doing anything that isn't perfectly agreeable to you.

Stephen. You consider we're being bullied, Colonel?

James. If it comes to bullying—

Ponting. It has come to bullying, if I'm any judge of bullying. First, you have Mr. Elkin, a meddlesome, obstructive—

Stephen [sitting at the writing-table]. Oh, he's obviously antagonistic to us—obviously.

Ponting. Of course he is. He sniffs a little job of work over this Miss Thornhill. It's his policy to cram Miss Thornhill down our throats. That's his game.

James [between his teeth]. By George . . . !

Ponting. And then you get Mr. Vallance, your own lawyer—

James [sitting in a chair on the right]. Aye, I'm a bit disappointed with Vallance.

Ponting. Dogmatizing about what is just and what is fitting—

Stephen. Hear, hear, Colonel! You don't pay a solicitor to take sides against you.

James. As if we couldn't be trusted to do the fair thing of our own accord!

Ponting. The upshot being that Miss Thornhill, supported openly by the one, and tacitly by the other, will be marching in here and—and—

James. Kicking up a rumpus.

Ponting. I shouldn't be surprised.

Louisa. A rumpus! [Sitting upon the settee on the left] She wouldn't dare.

Ann [rising]. That would be terrible—a rumpus—

Rose [in the middle of the room]. I shouldn't be surprised either. You mustn't expect too much, you know, from a girl who's . . .

Stephen [interpreting Rose's shrug]. It's legitimate.

Ann. No, I suppose we oughtn't to expect her to be the same as our children.

Ponting. And finally, to cap it all, you have your brother Thaddeus—your brother—

James. Ha, yes! Tad obliged us with a pretty stiff lecture, didn't he?

Louisa. So did Phyllis.

Ann [*seating herself beside LOUISA*]. It was Phyllis who began it.

Rose [*swaying herself to and fro upon the back of the chair next to the writing-table*]. Tad's wife! She's a suitable person to be lectured by, I must say.

Stephen. Poor old Tad! He was only trying to excuse her rudeness.

Rose. Just fancy! The two Tads sharing equally with ourselves!

Stephen. It is curious, at first sight.

Rose. Extraordinary.

Stephen. But, naturally, the law makes no distinctions.

Rose. No. It was the lady's method of announcing that she's as good as we are.

James. Tad and his wife with forty or fifty thousand pound, p'raps, to play with! So the world wags.

Rose. Positively maddening.

Louisa. We shall see Phyllis aping us now more than ever.

Ann. And making that boy and girl of hers still more conceited.

Louisa. They needn't let apartments any longer; that's a mercy.

Ann. We shall be spared that disgrace.

James. Strong language, mother!

Stephen. Hardly disgrace. You can't call the curate of their parish church a lodger in the ordinary sense of the term.

Louisa. Phyllis's girl might make a match of it with Mr. Trist in a couple of years' time. She's fifteen.

Ann. A forward fifteen.

Rose. It's a fairy story. A woman who's brought nothing but the worst of luck to Tad from the day he married her!

James. The devil's luck.

Stephen. Been his ruin—his ruin, professionally—without the shadow of a doubt.

Louisa. Such a good-looking fellow he used to be, too.

Ann. Handsome.

Louisa [*archly*]. It was Tad I fell in love with, Stephen—not with you.

Stephen. And popular; *He'd* have had the conductorship of the choral societies but for

his mistake; Rawlinson would never have had it. Councillor Pritchard admitted as much at a committee-meeting.

Ponting [*seated upon the settee on the right*]. Butcher—the wife's father—wasn't he?

Rose. Just as bad. Old Burdock kept a grocer's shop at the corner of East Street.

Stephen. West Street.

Rose. West Street, was it? She's the common or garden over-educated petty-tradesman's daughter.

James [*oratorically*]. No, no; you can't overeducate, Rose. You can *wrongly* educate—

Rose. Oh, don't start that, Jim. [*To Ponting*] She was a pupil of Tad's.

Stephen [*holding up his hands*], Marriage—marriage—!

Louisa. Stephen!

James. If it isn't the right sort o' marriage!

Stephen. Poor old Tad!

James. Rich old Tad to-day, though! [*Chuckling*] Ha, ha!

Rose [*glancing at the door*]. Sssh!

[*THADDEUS returns. The others look down their noses or at distant objects*]

Thaddeus [*closing the door and advancing*]. I—I hope you're not angry with Phyllis.

Stephen [*resignedly*]. Angry?

Thaddeus. Or with me.

Ann. Anger would be out of place in a house of mourning.

James. Women's tongues, Tad!

Stephen. Yes; the ladies—they will make mischief.

Louisa. Not every woman, Stephen.

Thaddeus. Phyllis hasn't the slightest desire to make mischief. Why on earth should Phyl want to make mischief? [*Sitting in the chair in the middle of the room*] She's a little nerry—a little unstrung; that's what's the matter with Phyllis.

Louisa. There's no cause for *her* to be specially upset that I can think of.

Ann. She didn't know Edward in the old days as we did.

Thaddeus. No, but being with him on Wednesday night, when the change came—that's affected her very deeply, poor girl; bowled her over. [*To Rose*] She helped to nurse him.

Rose [*indifferently*]. One of the nurses cracked up, didn't she?

James. The night-nurse.

Thaddeus [nodding]. Sent word late on Wednesday afternoon that she couldn't attend to her duties.

Stephen. The day-nurse knocking off at eight o'clock! Dreadful!

Thaddeus. There we were, rushing about all over the place—all over the place—to find a substitute.

James. And no success.

Thaddeus [rubbing his knees]. There's where Phyllis came in handy; there's where Phyl came in handy.

Louisa. Phyllis hadn't more than two or three hours of it, while Ann and I were resting, when all's said and done.

Ann. Not more than two or three hours alone, at the outside.

Thaddeus. No; but, as I say, it was during those two or three hours that the change set in. It's been a shock to her.

Louisa. The truth is, Phyllis delights in making a fuss, Tad.

Thaddeus. Phyl!

Ann. She loves to make a martyr of herself.

Thaddeus. Phyl does!

Louisa. You delight to make a martyr of her, then; perhaps that's it.

Ann. I suppose you do it to hide her faults.

Louisa. It would be far more sensible of you, Tad, to strive to correct them—

Ann. If it's not too late—far more sensible.

Louisa. And teach her a different system of managing her home—

Ann. And how to bring up her children more in keeping with their position—

Louisa. With less pride and display.

Ann. They treat their *cousins* precisely like dirt.

Louisa. Dirt under the foot.

Ann. Why Phyllis can't be satisfied with a cook-general passes my comprehension—

Rose [wearily]. Oh, shut up!

James. Steady, mother!

Thaddeus. [looking at them all]. Ah, you've never liked Phyllis from the beginning, any of you.

Louisa. Never liked her!

Thaddeus. Never cottoned to her, never appreciated her. Oh, I know—old Mr. Burdock's shop! [Simply] Well, Ann! well, Lou; shop or no shop, there's no better

wife—no better woman—breathing than Phyl.

Louisa. One may like a person without being blind to short-comings.

Ann. Nobody's flawless—nobody.

Louisa. There are two sides to every person as well as to every question, I always maintain.

Thaddeus. However, maybe it won't matter so much in the future. It hasn't made things easier for us in the past. [Snapping his fingers softly] But now—

Stephen [caustically]. Henceforth you and your wife will be above the critical opinion of others, eh, Tad?

James. Aye, Tad's come into money now. Mind what you're at, mother! Be careful, Lou! Tad's come into money.

Thaddeus [in a quiet voice, but clenching his hands tightly]. My God, I hope I have! I'm not a hypocrite, Jim. My God, I hope I have!

[The door opens and ELKIN appears]

Elkin. Miss Thornhill is here.

[There is a general movement. THADDEUS walks away to the fireplace. JAMES, STEPHEN, and PONTING also arise, and ROSE joins PONTING at the library-table. ANN and LOUISA shake out their skirts formidably, their husbands taking up a position near them. HELEN THORNHILL enters, followed by VALLANCE, who closes the door. HELEN is a graceful, brilliant-looking girl, with perfectly refined manners, wearing an elegant traveling-dress. ELKINS presents HELEN]

Miss Thornhill. [To HELEN, pointing to the group on left] These gentlemen are the late Mr. Mortimore's brothers. [Pointing to ROSE] His sister.

Helen [almost inaudibly]. Oh, yes.

Stephen [drawing attention to himself by an uneasy cough]. Stephen.

Ann [humbly]. I'm Mrs. James.

Louisa [in the same tone]. Mrs. Stephen.

Rose [seating herself on the left of the library-table]. Rose—Mrs. Ponting. [Glancing at PONTING] My husband.

Thaddeus. [now standing behind the writing-table]. Thaddeus. My wife is up-stairs, trying on her— [He checks himself and retreats, again sitting at the centre window]

[HELEN receives these various announcements with a dignified inclination of the head]

James [*seating himself at the writing-table; to HELEN*]. Tired, I dessay?

Helen. A little.

Stephen [*bringing forward the armchair from the fireplace*]. You weren't in Paris, Mr. Elkin tells us, when his letter—?

Helen. No; I was nearly a nine hours' journey from Paris, staying with friends at St. Etienne.

Rose. A pity.

Louisa. Great pity.

Helen. Mr. Elkin's letter was re-posted and reached me on Wednesday. I got back to Paris that night.

Elkin [*seating himself beside her*]. And had a hard day's traveling again yesterday.

Stephen [*sitting in the armchair*]. She must be worn out.

Ann. Indeed she must.

Ponting [*sitting by Rose*]. Hot weather, too. Most exhausting.

Elkin [*to HELEN*]. And you were out and about this morning with Mrs. Elkin before eight, I heard?

Helen. She brought me round here.

Elkin [*sympathetically*]. Ah, yes.

James. Round here?

[*ELKIN motions significantly towards the ceiling*]

Oh—aye. [*After another pause, to HELEN*]. When did you see him last—alive?

Helen. In April. He spent Easter with me. [*Unobtrusively opening a little bag which she carries and taking out a handkerchief*]. We always spent our holidays together. [*Drying her eyes*]. I was to have met him at Rouen on the fifteenth of next month; we were going to Etretat.

Elkin [*after a further silence*]. Er—h'm!—the principal business we are here to discuss is, I presume, the question of Miss Thornhill's future.

Helen [*quickly*]. Oh, no, please.

Elkin. No?

Helen. If you don't mind, I would rather my future were taken for granted, Mr. Elkin, without any discussion.

Elkin. Taken for granted?

Helen. I am no worse off than thousands of other young women who are suddenly thrown upon their own resources. I'm a great deal better off than many, for there's a calling already open to me—art. My prospects don't daunt me in the least.

Elkin. No, no; nobody wants to discourage you—

Helen [*interrupting ELKIN*]. I confess—I confess I am disappointed—hurt—that father hasn't made even a slight provision for me—not for the money's sake, but because—because I meant so much to him, I've always believed. He *would* have made me secure if he had lived longer, I am convinced.

Elkin [*soothingly*]. Not improbable; not improbable.

Helen. But I don't intend to let my mind dwell on that. What I do intend to think is that, in leaving me with merely my education and the capacity for earning my living, he has done more for my happiness—my real happiness—than if he had left me every penny he possessed. With no incentive to work, I might have drifted by and by into an idle, aimless life. I *should* have done so.

Stephen. A very rational view to take of it.

Ponting. Admirable!

[*There is a nodding of heads and a murmur of approval from the ladies*]

Elkin. Very admirable and praiseworthy [*To the others, diplomatically*]. But we are not to conclude that Miss Thornhill declines to entertain the idea of some—some arrangement which would enable her to embark upon her artistic career—

Helen. Yes, you are. I don't need assistance, and I couldn't accept it. [*Flaring up*]. I will accept nothing that hasn't come to me direct from my father—nothing. [*Softening*]. But I am none the less grateful to you, dear Mr. Elkin—[*looking round*] to everybody—for this kindness.

Stephen [*with a sigh*]. So be it; so be it, if it must be so.

Ponting. We don't wish to force assistance upon Miss Thornhill.

Stephen. On the contrary; we respect her independence of character.

[*ELKIN shrugs his shoulders at VAL-LANCE, who is now seated upon the settee on the right*]

James [*stroking his beard*]. Art—art. You've been studying painting, haven't you?

Helen. At Julian's, in the Rue de Berri, for three years—for pleasure, I imagined.

James [*glancing furtively at ANN*]. D'ye do oil portraits—family groups and so on?

Helen. I'm not very successful as a colorist. Black and white is what I am best at.

James [dubiously]. Black and white—

Stephen. Is there much demand for that form of art in Paris?

Helen. Paris? Oh, I shall come to London.

James. London, eh?

Helen. My drawing isn't quite good enough for over there. It's only good enough for England. I shall sell my jewelry and furniture—I'm sharing a flat in the Avenue de Messine with an American girl—and that will carry me along excellently till I'm fairly started. Oh, I shall do very well.

Rose. I live in London. My house will be somewhere for you to drop into, whenever you feel inclined.

Helen. Thank you.

Ponting [pulling at his moustache]. Often as you like—often as you like—

Rose [loftily]. As I am in "society," as they call it, that will be nice for you.

James [to ANN]. Now, then, mother, don't you be behind-hand—

Ann. I'm sure I shall be very pleased if Miss Thornton—

A Murmur. Thornhill—

Ann. If she'll pay us a visit. We're homely people, but she and Cissy could play tennis all day long.

Louisa. If she does come to Singlehampton, she mustn't go away without staying a day or two in the Crescent. [To HELEN] Do you play chess, dear?

[HELEN shakes her head]

My husband will teach you—won't you, Stephen?

Stephen. Honored.

Thaddeus [having risen and come forward]. I'm sorry my wife isn't here. We should be grieved if Miss Thornhill left us out in the cold.

Helen [looking at him with interest]. You are father's musical brother, aren't you?

Thaddeus. Yes—Tad.

Helen [with a faint smile]. I promise not to leave you out in the cold. [To everybody] I can only repeat, I am most grateful. [To ELKIN, about to rise] Mrs. Elkin is waiting for me, to take me to the dress-maker—

Elkin [detaining her]. One moment—one moment. [To the others] Gentlemen, Mr. Vallance and I have had our little talk, and we agree that the proper course to pursue in the matter of the late Mr. Mortimore's estate is to proceed at once to insert an advertisement in the public journals.

James. An advertisement?

Elkin. With the object of obtaining information respecting any will which he may have made at any time.

James [after a pause]. Oh—very good.

Stephen [coldly]. Does Mr. Vallance really advise that this is the proper course?

[VALLANCE rises, and THADDEUS again retires]

Vallance [assentingly]. In the peculiar circumstances of the case.

Elkin. We propose also to go a step further. We propose to circularize.

James. Circularize?

Ponting [disturbed]. What the dev—what's that?

Elkin. We propose to address a circular to every solicitor in the law-list asking for such information.

Helen [to ELKIN]. Is this necessary?

Elkin. Mr. Vallance will tell us—

Vallance. It comes under the head of taking all reasonable measures to find a will.

Helen [looking round]. I—I sincerely hope that no one will think that it is on my behalf that Mr. Elkin—

Elkin [checking her]. My dear, these are formal, and amicable, proceedings, to which everybody, we suggest, should be a party.

Vallance. Everybody.

Elkin [invitingly]. Everybody.

James [breaking a chilly silence]. All right. Go ahead, Mr. Elkin. [To STEPHEN] We're willing?

Stephen. Why not; why not? Rose . . . ?

Rose [hastily]. Oh, certainly.

Vallance [to JAMES]. I have your authority, Mr. Mortimore, for acting with Mr. Elkin in this matter?

James. You have, sir.

Elkin [to VALLANCE, rising]. Will you come round to my office with me?

[HELEN rises with ELKIN, whereupon the other men get to their feet. ANN and LOUISA also rise as HELEN comes to them and offers her hand]

Ann [shaking hands]. We're at the Grand Hotel.

Louisa [shaking hands]. So am I and my husband.

Helen. I'll call, if I may. [She shakes hands with STEPHEN and JAMES and goes to ROSE]

Rose [rising to shake hands with her]. We're at the Grand, too. Colonel Ponting and I would be delighted . . .

Ponting. Delighted.

[HELEN merely bows to PONTING; then she shakes hands with THADDEUS and passes out into the hall]

Elkin [having opened the door for HELEN—to everybody, genially]. Good-day; good-day.

James and Stephen. Good-day, Mr. Elkin. Good-day. [ELKIN follows HELEN]

Vallance [at the door—to JAMES and STEPHEN]. Where can I see you later?

James. The Grand. Food at half-past one.

Vallance. Thank you very much. [He bows to the ladies and withdraws, closing the door after him]

Ponting [pacing the room indignantly]. I wouldn't give the fellow so much as a dry biscuit!

[There is a general break up, ANN and LOUISA joining ROSE on the right]

James [pacifically]. Oh, there's no occasion to upset yourself, Colonel.

Ponting [on the left]. I wouldn't! I wouldn't! He's against us on every point.

James. Let 'em advertise, if it amuses 'em. [In an outburst] Let 'em advertiss and circularize till they're blue in the face.

Rose [with a shrill laugh]. Jim! Ha! ha! ha!

Ann and Louisa [solemnly]. Hus—s—sh!

James [dropping to a whisper]. Oh, I—I forgot.

Stephen. Yes, yes, yes; it's nothing more than a lawyer's trick, to swell their bill of costs.

James. Of course it isn't; of course it isn't. [Passing his hand under his beard] I want some air, mother. Get out o' this.

Ann [fastening her mantle]. You've an appointment at the tailor's, remember.

Stephen [looking at his watch]. So have I. James. Are you coming, Colonel? [Finding himself in the centre of a group—with a change of manner] I say: what a beautiful girl, this girl of Ned's!

Stephen. Exceedingly.

Ponting [producing his cigarette-case]. Charming young woman.

Ann and Louisa. Lovely. A lovely girl.

Rose. Quite presentable.

James. And she doesn't ask a shilling of us—not a bob.

Stephen. She impressed me enormously.

Ponting [with an unlighted cigarette in his mouth]. Charming; charming.

James. Ned ought to have left her a bit;

he ought to have left her a bit. [Resolutely] Mother—we'll have her down home.

Stephen. We must tell some fib or other as to who she is. Yes, we'll show her a little hospitality.

Ponting. And Rose—in London. That'll make it up to her.

Rose. Yes, that'll make it up to her.

[The ladies move into the hall; the men follow. JAMES is standing in the doorway and speaks to THADDEUS, who is now seated at the writing-table]

James. Tad, I'll stand you and your wife a good lunch. One-thirty.

[THADDEUS nods acceptance, and JAMES goes after the others. THADDEUS rises, and, looking through the blind of the middle window, watches them depart. Presently PHYLLIS appears, putting on her gloves]

Phyllis [at the door, drawing a breath of relief]. They've gone.

Thaddeus [turning]. Is that you, Phyl?

Phyllis [coming further into the room]. I've been waiting on the landing.

Thaddeus. Why didn't you come back, dear? You've missed Miss Thornhill.

Phyllis [walking away to the left, working at the fingers of a glove]. Yes, I—I know.

Thaddeus. The very person we were all here to meet.

Phyllis. I—I came over nervous. [Eagerly] What is she like?

Thaddeus. Such an aristocratic-looking girl.

Phyllis. Is she—is she?

Thaddeus. I'll tell you all about her by and by. [Pushing the door to and coming to PHYLLIS, anxiously] What do you think they're going to do now, Phyl?

Phyllis. Who?

Thaddeus. The lawyers. They're going to advertise.

Phyllis. Advertise?

Thaddeus. In the papers—to try to discover a will.

Phyllis. I—I suppose that's a mere matter of form?

Thaddeus. Elkin and Vallance say so. According to Stephen, it's simply a lawyer's dodge to run up costs. [Brightening] Anyhow, we mustn't complain, where a big estate is involved . . .

Phyllis. Is it—such a—big estate?

Thaddeus. Guess.

Phyllis. I can't.

Thaddeus [coming closer to her]. I heard Elkin's managing-clerk tell Jim and the Colonel this morning that poor Ned may have died worth anything between a hundred and fifty and two hundred thousand pounds.

Phyllis [faintly]. Two hundred thousand . . . !

Thaddeus. Yes.

Phyllis. Oh, Tad—! [*She sits, on the settee on the left, leaning her head upon her hands*]

Thaddeus. Splitting the difference, and allowing for death duties, our share would be close upon forty thousand. To be on the safe side, put it at thirty-nine thousand. Thirty-nine thousand pounds! [*Moving about the room excitedly*] I've been reckoning. Invest that at four per cent.—one is justified in calculating upon a four per cent. basis—invest thirty-nine thousand at four per cent., and there you have an income of over fifteen hundred a year. Fifteen hundred a year! [*Returning to her*] When we die, seven hundred and fifty a year for Joyce, seven hundred and fifty for Cyril!

[*She rises quickly and clings to him, burying her head upon his shoulder and clutching at the lapel of his coat*]
Poor old lady! [*Putting his arms round her*] Poor old lady! You've gone through such a lot, haven't you?

Phyllis [sobbing]. We both have.

Thaddeus. Sixteen years of it.

Phyllis. Sixteen years.

Thaddeus. Of struggle—struggle and failure.

Phyllis. Failure brought upon you by your wife—by me.

Thaddeus. Nonsense—nonsense—

Phyllis. You always call it nonsense; you know it's true. If you hadn't married me—if you'd married a girl of better family—you wouldn't have lost caste in the town—

Thaddeus. Hush, hush! Don't cry, Phyl; don't cry, old lady.

Phyllis. You'd have had the choral societies, and the High School, and the organ at All Saints; you'd have been at the top of the tree long ago. You know you would!

Thaddeus [rallying her]. And if you hadn't married me, you might have captivated a gay young officer at Claybrook and got to London eventually. Rose did it, and

you might have done it. So that makes us quits. Don't cry.

Phyllis [gradually regaining her composure]. There was a young fellow at the barracks who was after me.

Thaddeus [nodding]. You were prettier than Rose, a smarter girl altogether.

Phyllis [drying her eyes]. I'll be smart again now, dear. I'm only thirty-five. What's thirty-five!

Thaddeus. The children won't swallow up everything now, will they?

Phyllis. No; but Joyce shall look sweeter and daintier than ever, though.

Thaddeus. Cyril shall have a first-class, public-school education; that I'm determined upon. There's Rugby—Rugby's the nearest—or Malvern—

Phyllis [with a catch in her breath]. Oh, but—Tad—we'll leave Singlehampton, won't we?

Thaddeus. Permanently?

Phyllis. Yes—yes!

Thaddeus. Won't that be rather a mistake?

Phyllis. A mistake?

Thaddeus. Just as we're able to hold up our heads in the town.

Phyllis. We should never be able to hold up our heads in Singlehampton. If we were clothed in gold, we should still be lepers underneath; the curse would still rest on us.

Thaddeus [bewildered]. But where—where shall we—?

Phyllis. I don't care—anywhere. [*Passionately*] Anywhere where I'm not sneered at for bringing up my children decently, and for making my home more tasteful than my neighbors'; anywhere where it isn't known that I'm the daughter of a small shopkeeper—the daughter of "old Burdock of West Street"! [*Imploringly*] Oh, Tad . . . !

Thaddeus. You're right. Nothing is ever forgiven you in the place you're born in. We'll clear out.

Phyllis [slipping her arm through his]. When—when will you get me away?

Thaddeus. Directly, directly; as soon as the lawyers . . . [*He pauses, looking at her blankly*]

Phyllis [frightened]. What's the matter?

Thaddeus. We—we're talking as if—as if Ned's money is already ours!

Phyllis [withdrawing her arm—steadily]. It will be.

Thaddeus. Will it, do you think?
Phyllis [with an expressionless face]. I prophesy—it will be.

[*HEATH enters and, seeing THADDEUS and PHYLLIS, draws back*]

Heath. I'm sorry, sir. I thought the room was empty.

Thaddeus. We're going. [*As he and PHYLLIS pass out into the hall*] Don't come to the door.

Heath. Thank you, sir.

[*HEATH quietly and methodically replaces the chair at the window on the right. Then, after a last look round, he switches off the lights and leaves the room again in gloom*]

ACT TWO

It is a month later.

The drawing-room of a modern, cheaply-built villa, the residence of the THADDEUS MORTIMORES, in the town of Singlehampton. In the wall at the back are two windows. One is a bay-window provided with a window-seat; the other, the window on the right, opens to the ground into a small garden. At the bottom of the garden a paling runs from left to right, and in the paling there is a gate which gives access to a narrow lane. Beyond are the gardens and backs of other houses.

The fireplace is on the right of the room, the door on the left. A grand piano, with its head towards the windows, and a music-stool occupy the middle of the room. On the right of the music-stool there is an armchair, and against the piano, facing the fireplace, there is a settee. Another settee is at the further end of the fireplace, and on the nearer side, opposite this settee, is an armchair. Also on the right hand there is a round table. An ottoman, opposing the settee by the piano, stands close to the table.

At the end of the piano there is a small table with an armchair on its right and left, and on the extreme left of the room stands another armchair with a still smaller table beside it. On the left of the bay-window there is a writing-table, and in front of the writing-table, but turned to the window, a chair. Other articles of furniture fill spaces against the walls.

There is a mirror over the fireplace and a clock on the mantel-shelf, and lying upon

the round table are a hat and a pair of gloves belonging to HELEN. Some flowers in pots hide the empty grate.

The room and everything in the room are eloquent of narrow means, if not of actual poverty. But the way in which the cheap furniture is dressed up, and the manner of its arrangement about the room, give evidence of taste and refinement.

The garden is full of the bright sunshine of a fine July afternoon.

HELEN, engaged in making a sketch of JOYCE and CYRIL, who are facing her, is sitting in the chair on the right of the table at the end of the piano. A drawing-block is on her knees and a box of crayons is on the table at her elbow. JOYCE is a slim, serious girl of fifteen; CYRIL, a handsome boy of fourteen.

HELEN and the THADDEUS MORTIMORES are dressed in mourning, but not oppressively so.

THADDEUS is at the piano, accompanying a sentimental ballad which TRIST, standing beside him, is singing. TRIST is a big, healthy-looking, curly-headed young fellow in somewhat shabby clerical clothes. PHYLLIS, looking more haggard than when last seen, is on the settee by the fireplace. Her hands lie idly upon some needlework in her lap, and she is in deep thought.

Thaddeus [starting afresh with the symphony]. Once more . . .

Helen [to the children, softly]. Do you want a rest?

Cyril [standing close to his sister]. No, thanks.

Joyce [in the chair at the extreme left]. Oh, no; don't give us a rest.

[*As the symphony ends, the door opens a little way, and JAMES pops his head in*]

James. Hallo!

Thaddeus. Hallo, Jim!

[*JAMES enters, followed by STEPHEN; both with an air of bustle and self-importance. They also are in mourning, are gloved, and are wearing their hats, which they remove on entering*]

Stephen. May we come in?

James. Good-afternoon, Mr. Trist.

Stephen. How do you do, Mr. Trist?

Trist [to JAMES and STEPHEN]. How are you; how are you?

James [to the children, kissing JOYCE].

Well, kids! [*Shaking hands with HELEN*]
Well, my dear!

[*PHYLLIS rises. JAMES crosses to her*]
Don't get up, Phyllis. What's this? You're not very bobbish, I hear.

Phyllis. [*nervously*]. It's nothing.

Thaddeus [*tidying his music*]. She's sleeping badly just now, poor old lady.

Stephen [*having greeted HELEN and the children—to PHYLLIS*]. Oh, Phyllis, Louisa has discovered a wonderful cure for sleeplessness at the herbalist's in Crown Street. A few dried leaves merely. You strew them under the bed and the effect is magical.

James. Glass of warm milk's my remedy—

Stephen. Eighteen-pence an ounce, it costs.

James. Not that sleeplessness bothers me.

Phyllis [*sitting on the ottoman and resuming her work—to STEPHEN*]. Thank you for telling me about it.

James [*to HELEN*]. Making quite a long stay here.

Helen [*smiling*]. Am I not?

Stephen. You and Phyllis, Tad, are more honored than we were in the Crescent.

James. Or we were at "Ivanhoe." She was only a couple o' nights with us.

Stephen. Less with us. She arrived one morning and left the next.

James [*to HELEN*]. Been in Nelson Villas over a week, haven't you?

Helen [*touching her drawing*]. Is it more than a week?

James [*looking at HELEN's drawing*]. Taking the youngsters' portraits, too.

Stephen [*also looking at the drawing*]. H'm! I suppose children are difficult subjects.

Trist [*moving towards the door—to HELEN*]. Miss Thornhill, don't forget your engagement.

Helen [*to JOYCE and CYRIL*]. Mr. Trist is going to treat us to the flower-show by and by.

Cyril. Good man!

Joyce. Oh, Mr. Trist!

Stephen [*to TRIST*]. Not driving you away, I hope?

Trist [*at the door*]. No, no; I've some work to do.

[*He withdraws. STEPHEN puts his hat on the top of the piano*]

James [*after watching the door close*]. Decent sort o' young man, that; nothing of the lodger about him.

Stephen. I've always said so. [*To THADDEUS, lowering his voice*] Mr. Trist knows how—er—h'm—poor Edward left his affairs?

Thaddeus. Everybody does; it's all over the town.

Stephen [*resignedly*]. Yes; impossible to keep it to ourselves.

James. Thanks to their precious advertisement. [*To JOYCE and CYRIL loudly*] Now, then, children; be off with you! I want to talk to your father and mother.

Joyce [*to HELEN*]. Will you excuse us?

Cyril. Awfully sorry, Helen.

[*The children pass through the open window into the garden and disappear.*]

HELEN rises and, having laid her drawing-block aside, is following them

James [*to HELEN*]. Not you, my dear. You're welcome to hear our business.

Helen. Oh, no; you mustn't let me intrude.

Stephen. I think Helen ought to hear it.

[*HELEN pauses, standing by the table on the right*]

I think she ought to be made aware of what's going on.

James. Tad—

Thaddeus [*coming forward*]. Eh?

James. The meeting's to take place this afternoon.

[*PHYLLIS looks up from her work suddenly, with parted lips*]

Thaddeus. This afternoon?

Stephen. At four o'clock.

Thaddeus [*glancing at the clock on the mantelpiece*]. It's past three now.

James [*placing his hat on the table at the end of the piano and sitting at the left of the table*]. It's been fixed up at last rather in a hurry.

Stephen [*sitting in the chair on the extreme left*]. We didn't get Elkin's letter, telling us he was coming through, till this morning.

Thaddeus. You might have notified us earlier, though, one of you. Just like you fellows!

Stephen [*waving his arms*]. On the day I go to press I've quite enough to remember.

James [*to THADDEUS, roughly*]. It's your holiday-time; what have you got to do? An hour's notice is as good as a week's.

Stephen [*to HELEN*]. This is a meeting of the family, Helen, to be held at my brother's house, for the purpose of—er—

Helen [advancing a little]. Winding matters up?

James. For the purpose of receiving Elkin and Vallance's report.

Helen [keenly]. And to—?

James. And to decide upon the administration of the estate on behalf of the next-of-kin.

Helen. In my words—wind matters up. [With an appearance of cheerfulness] Which means an end to a month's suspense, doesn't it?

Thaddeus [apologetically]. A not very satisfactory end to yours.

Helen. To mine? [With an effort] Oh, I—I've suffered no suspense, Mr. Tad. Mr. Elkin has kept me informed of the result of the advertising and the circularizing from the beginning.

Thaddeus. But there has been no result.

Helen. No result is the result.

Stephen. Exactly.

[During the following talk, HELEN moves away and seats herself in the chair by the head of the piano. PHYLLIS has resumed her work again, bending over it so that her face is almost hidden]

Thaddeus [to JAMES and STEPHEN]. Will Rose and the Colonel be down?

James. We're on our way to the station to meet 'em.

Stephen [bitterly]. Ha! Will they be down?

Thaddeus. You didn't overlook them, evidently.

James [with a growl]. No; the gallant Colonel doesn't give us much chance of overlooking him.

Stephen. Colonel Ponting might be the only person interested, judging by the tone he adopts.

James. A nice life he's been leading us lately.

Stephen. Elkin and Vallance are sick of him.

James. Hasn't two penny pieces to clink together; that's the size of it.

Stephen. A man may be hard up and yet behave with dignity.

James. I expect the decorators are asking for a bit on the nail.

Thaddeus [sitting on the right of the table at the end of the piano]. Decorators?

Stephen [to THADDEUS]. Haven't you heard?

Thaddeus. No.

Stephen. The magnificent house they've taken in Carlos Place—?

James. Close to Berkeley Square.

Stephen [correcting JAMES' pronunciation]. Berkeley Square.

James. Stables and motor-garridge at the back.

Stephen. Oh, yes; they're decorating and furnishing most elaborately. Lou had a note from Rose a day or two since.

James. He'll strip my sister of every penny she's come into, if she doesn't look out.

Stephen. The gross indelicacy of the thing is what offends me. We have been content to remain passive.

James. And I fancy our plans and projects are as important as the Colonel's.

Stephen. I should assume so.

James [to STEPHEN, with a jerk of the thumb towards THADDEUS]. Shall I . . . ?

Stephen. No harm in it now.

James [to THADDEUS, leaning forward—impressively]. Tad . . .

Thaddeus. What?

James. That land at the bottom of Gordon Street, where the allotment grounds are—

Thaddeus. Yes?

James. It's mine.

Thaddeus. Yours, Jim?

James. It belongs to me. I've signed the contract and paid a deposit.

Thaddeus. What do you intend to do with it?

James. What should I intend to do with it—eat it? I intend to build there—build the finest avenue of houses in Singlehamp-ton. [Rising and going to the piano, where he traces a plan on the lid with his finger] Look here!

[THADDEUS joins him and watches the tracing of the plan]

Here's Gordon Street. Here's the pub at the corner. I come along here—straight along here—to Albert Terrace. Opposite Albert Terrace I take in Clark's piano factory; and where Clark's factory stands I lay out an ornamental garden with a fountain in the middle of it. On I go at a curve, to avoid the playground of Fothergill's school, till I reach Bolton's store. He stops me, but I'll squeeze him out some day, as sure as my name's James Henry! [To THADDEUS] D'ye see?

Thaddeus [uncomfortably, eyeing HELEN]. Splendid; splendid.

James [moving round the head of the piano to the right]. Poor old Ned! Ha! my brother won't have done so badly by his native town after all.

Thaddeus [under his breath, trying to remind JAMES of HELEN'S presence]. Jim—Jim . . .

James [obliviously, coming upon HELEN]. D'ye know the spot we're talking about, my dear?

Helen. No.

James. You must get 'em to walk you down there. [To PHYLLIS] You trot her down there, Phyllis.

Phyllis [without raising her eyes from her work]. I will.

Stephen [to JAMES]. You haven't told them everything, Jim.

James [sitting upon the settle by the piano]. Oh, your offices . . .

Stephen [to everybody]. It isn't of the greatest importance, perhaps, but it's part of James's scheme to erect an exceptionally noble building in the new road to provide adequate printing and publishing offices for the *Times* and *Mirror*.

Thaddeus. What, you're not deserting King Street, Stephen?

Stephen [rising and walking to the fireplace]. Yes, I've had enough of those cramped, poky premises.

Thaddeus. They are inconvenient.

Stephen [on the hearthrug, facing the others]. And, to be perfectly frank, I've had enough of Mr. Hammond and the *Courier*.

Thaddeus. I don't blame you there. The *Courier* is atrociously personal occasionally.

Stephen [pompously]. I don't say it because Hammond is, in a manner, my rival—I'm not so small-minded as that—but I do say that he is a vulgar man and that the *Courier* is a vulgar and mischievous journal.

James. He's up to date, though, is Mister Freddy Hammond.

Stephen. His plant is slightly more modern than mine, I admit.

James [chuckling]. Aye, you'll be able to present those antediluvian printing-presses of yours to the museum as curiosities.

Stephen [with a wave of the hand]. Anyhow, the construction of Jim's new road marks a new era in the life of the *Times* and *Mirror*. [Leaving the fireplace] I'm

putting no less than twelve thousand pounds into the dear old paper, Tad.

Thaddeus [standing by the table on the left]. Twelve thousand . . .

Stephen. How will that agree with Mr. Hammond's digestion, eh? Twelve thousand pounds! [Coming to THADDEUS] And what are your plans for the future, if one may ask? You'll leave these wretched villas, of course?

Thaddeus [evasively]. Oh, I—I'm waiting till this law business is absolutely settled.

Stephen [hastily]. Quite right; quite right. So am I; so am I, actually. But we may talk, I suppose, among ourselves—

James [looking at his watch and rising]. By George! We shall miss Rose and the Colonel.

Stephen [fetching his hat]. Pish! the Colonel.

James [to HELEN]. Ta-ta, my dear.

[HELEN rises, and he shakes hands with her]

See you at the meeting, Phyllis.

Stephen [to HELEN, across the piano]. Good-bye, Helen.

James [having picked up his hat, at the door]. Don't be late, Tad.

Stephen [at the door]. No, no; don't be late.

Thaddeus. Four o'clock.

Stephen. Sharp.

[THADDEUS follows JAMES and STEPHEN into the hall and returns immediately]

Thaddeus [closing the door]. My dear Helen, I apologize to you most humbly.

Helen [coming forward]. For what?

Thaddeus. For Jim's bad taste, and Stephen's, in talking before you as they've been doing.

Helen. Oh, it's of no consequence.

Thaddeus. I could have kicked Jim.

Helen [impulsively]. Mr. Tad—[giving him her hand] I congratulate you. [Going to PHYLLIS and kissing her lightly upon the cheek] I congratulate you both heartily. No two people in the world deserve good fortune more than you do.

Thaddeus. It's extremely kind and gracious of you to take it in this way.

Helen. Why, in what other way could I take it?

Thaddeus. At your age, you mayn't esteem money very highly. But—there are other considerations . . .

Helen [turning away and seating herself upon the settee by the piano]. Yes, we won't speak of those.

Thaddeus [walking to the bay-window]. And there was just a chance that the inquiries might have brought a will to light—a will benefiting you. Though you were anxious not to appear unfriendly to the family, you must have realized that.

Helen. Whether I did or not, it's all done with now finally—finally. [*Blowing the subject from her*] Phew!

Thaddeus [his elbows on the piano, speaking across it to HELEN]. Phyl and I are not altogether selfish and grasping. She has been worrying herself to death these last few days—haven't you, Phyl?—ever since we heard the meeting was near at hand.

Phyllis [in a low voice]. Yes.

Thaddeus. Ever since you came to us, in fact.

Helen [jumping up]. Ah, what a nuisance I've been to you! [*Sitting beside PHYLLIS*] How relieved you'll be to pack me off to-morrow!

Thaddeus. To-morrow?

[*Uttering a little sound, PHYLLIS stops working and stares straight before her*]

Helen [slipping an arm round PHYLLIS's waist]. That letter I had while we were at lunch—it was from a girl who used to sit next to me at Julian's. She's found me some capital rooms, she says, close to Regent's Park, and I'm going up to look at them.

[*THADDEUS comes to her*]

In any event, the sooner I get out of Single-hampton the better.

Thaddeus. Why?

Helen. Everybody, in the town eyes me so queerly; I'm certain they suspect.

Thaddeus. It's your imagination.

Helen. It isn't. [*Hesitatingly*] I—I've confided in Mr. Trist.

Thaddeus [surprised]. Confided in Trist?

Helen [nodding]. I hated the idea of his thinking me—deceitful.

Thaddeus [sitting on the settee by the piano]. Trist would never have guessed.

Helen. Oh, Mr. Tad, who, in heaven's name, that wasn't born yesterday could believe the story of my being simply a *protégée* of father's, the daughter of an old business friend of his? Your brother Stephen may be an excellent editor, but his powers of invention are beneath contempt.

Thaddeus [laughing]. Ha, ha, ha! [*Rub-*

bing his knees] That's one for Stephen; that's a rap for Stephen.

Helen. And then, again, the other members of the family are becoming so horribly jealous.

Thaddeus [seriously]. Ah, yes.

Helen. You noticed your brother's remarks? And Mrs. James and Mrs. Stephen almost cut me in East Street this morning.

Thaddeus [clenching his fists]. Thank God, we shall have done with that sort of thing directly we shake the dust of Single-hampton from our feet!

Helen. Directly you—!

Thaddeus [gaily]. There! Now I've let the cat out of the bag. Phyllis will tell you. You tell her, Phyl. [*Rising*] I promised Rawlinson I'd help him index his madrigals this afternoon; I'll run round to him and explain. [*Pausing on his way to the door*] Helen, you must be our first visitor in our new home, wherever we pitch our tent. Make that a bargain with her, Phyl. [*At the door, to PHYLLIS*] We'll start at ten minutes to, old lady. Be ready. [*He disappears, closing the door after him*]

Helen [rising and walking away to the left]. Well! I do think it shabby of you, Phyllis. You and Mr. Tad might have trusted me with your secret. [*Facing her*] Phyllis, wouldn't it be glorious if you came to London to live—or near London? Wouldn't it?

Phyllis [in a strange, quiet voice, her hands lying quite still upon her lap]. Helen—Helen dear . . .

Helen. Yes?

Phyllis. That morning, a month ago, in Linchpool—while we were all sitting in your poor father's library waiting for you . . .

Helen [returning to her]. On the Friday morning—

Phyllis. There was a discussion as to making you an allowance, and—[*her eyes avoiding HELEN's*] and everybody was most anxious—most anxious—that you should be placed upon a proper footing.

Helen. Mr. Elkin broached the subject when I arrived. You were out of the room.

Phyllis. Yes. And you declined . . .

Helen. Certainly. I gave them my reasons. Why do you bring this up?

[*PHYLLIS rises, laying her work upon the table behind her*]

Phyllis [drawing a deep breath]. Helen—I want you to reconsider your decision.

Helen. Reconsider it?

Phyllis. I want you to reconsider your determination not to accept an allowance from the family.

Helen. Impossible.

Phyllis. Oh, don't be so hasty. Listen first. This good fortune of ours—of Tad's and mine—that you've congratulated us upon—I shall never enjoy it—

Helen [*incredulously*]. Oh, Phyllis!

Phyllis. I shall not. It will never bring me a moment's happiness unless you consent to receive an allowance from the family—sufficient to give you a sense of independence . . .

Helen [*seating herself in the chair on the extreme left, with her back to PHYLLIS*]. I couldn't.

Phyllis. And to make your future perfectly safe.

Helen. I couldn't.

Phyllis [*entreatingly*]. Do—do—

Helen. It's out of the question.

Phyllis. Please—for my sake!

Helen [*turning to her*]. I'm sorry to distress you, Phyllis; indeed I'm sorry. But when you see me gaining some little position in London, through my work, you'll cease to feel miserable about me.

Phyllis. Never—never—

Helen [*starting up and walking to the fireplace impetuously*]. Oh, you don't understand me—my pride. A pensioner of the Mortimore family! I! How can you suggest it? I refused their help before I was fully acquainted with these, to me, uncongenial relations of father's—I don't include Mr. Tad in that expression, of course; and now I *am* acquainted with them, I would refuse it a thousand times. If I were starving, I wouldn't put myself under the smallest obligation to the Mortimores.

Phyllis [*unsteadily*]. Obligation—to—the—Mortimores—obligation! [*As if about to make some communication to HELEN, supporting herself by leaning upon the table on the right, her body bent forward—almost inaudibly*] Helen—Helen . . .

Helen. What . . . ?

[*There is a short silence, and then PHYLLIS drops back upon the settee by the piano*]

Phyllis [*rocking herself to and fro*]. Oh—oh, dear—oh—!

Helen [*coming to her and standing over her*]. You're quite ill, Phyllis; your bad nights are taking it out of you dreadfully.

You ought to have the advice of a doctor.

Phyllis [*weakly*]. No—don't send for the doctor—

Helen. Go up to your room, then, and keep quiet till Mr. Tad calls you. [*Glancing at the clock*] You've a quarter of an hour—

Phyllis [*clutching HELEN's skirt*]. Helen—you're fond of me and Tad—you said yesterday how attached you'd grown to us . . .

Helen [*soothingly*]. I am—I am—very fond of you.

Phyllis. And the children . . . ?

Helen. Yes, yes.

Phyllis. My poor children!

Helen. Hush! Why poor children? Pull yourself together. Go up to your room.

Phyllis [*taking HELEN's hand and caressing it*]. Helen—if you won't accept an allowance from the entire family, accept it from Tad and me.

Helen. No, no, no.

Phyllis. Four—three hundred a year.

Helen. No.

Phyllis. Two hundred.

Helen. No.

Phyllis. We could spare it. We shouldn't miss it; We should never miss it.

Helen. Not a penny.

Phyllis [*rising and gripping HELEN's shoulders*]. You shall—you shall accept it, Helen.

Helen. Phyllis! [*releasing herself and drawing back*] Phyllis, you're very odd to-day. You've got this allowance idea on the brain. Look here; don't let's mention the subject again, or I—I shall be offended.

Phyllis [*dully, hanging her head*]. All right. Very well.

Helen. Forgive me. It happens to be just the one point I'm sensitive upon. [*Listening, then going to the open window*] Here are the children. Do go up-stairs. [*Calling into the garden*] Hallo!

[*PHYLLIS leaves the room as CYRIL and JOYCE appear outside the window.*]

The boy is carrying a few freshly cut roses]

Now, then, children! Isn't it time we routed Mr. Trist out of his study?

Cyril [*entering and going towards the door*]. I'll stir the old chap up. [*Remembering the nosegay*] Oh . . . ! [*Presenting it to HELEN*] Allow me . . .

Helen. For me? How sweet of you! [*Plac-*]

ing the flowers against her belt and then at her breast! Where shall I wear them—here, or here?

Cyril. Anywhere you like. [*Awkwardly*] We sha'n't see anything nicer at the flower-show, I'm certain.

Helen. No; they're beautiful.

Cyril [*his eyes on the carpet*]. I don't mean the flowers . . .

Helen [*inclining her head*]. Thank you.

[*CYRIL again makes for the door*] Don't disturb mother. [*Moving away to the fireplace, where, at the mirror, over the mantel-shelf, she fixes the roses in her belt*] She has to go to Claybrook Road with your father in a little while, and I want her to rest.

Cyril [*pausing*]. She is seedy, isn't she? [*Puckering his brows*] Going to Uncle Jim's, are they?

Helen. Yes.

Cyril. That's to do with our money, I expect.

Helen [*busy at the mirror*]. With your money?

Cyril. Father's come into a heap of money, you know.

Joyce [*reproachfully*]. Cyril!

Cyril [*not heeding her*]. So have Uncle Jim and Uncle Stephen and Aunt Rose.

Helen. I'm delighted.

[*JOYCE signs to CYRIL to desist*]

Cyril [*to JOYCE*]. Oh, what's the use of our keeping it dark any longer?

Joyce. We promised mother—

Cyril. Ages ago. But you heard what father said to Uncle Stephen—it's all over the town. Young Pither says there's something about it in the paper.

Helen. The paper?

Cyril. The *Courier*—that fellow Hammond's paper. Hammond was beastly sarcastic about it last week, Pither says. [*Going to the door*] I don't read the *Courier* myself.

[*At the door, he beckons to JOYCE. She joins him, and his voice drops to a deep whisper*]

Besides—

[*He glances significantly at HELEN, whose back is turned to them*]

it'll make it easier for us. [*Nudging JOYCE*] Now's your chance; do it now. [*Aloud*] Give me five minutes, you two. I can't be seen at the flower-show in these togs.

[*He withdraws. Having assured herself*

that the door is closed, JOYCE advances to HELEN]

Joyce. Helen . . .

Helen. Hallo!

Joyce [*gravely*]. Have you a minute to spare?

Helen [*coming to the round table*]. Yes, dear.

Joyce. Helen, it's quite true we've come into a great deal of money. Uncle Edward, who lived at Linchpool—oh, you knew him, didn't you?—he was a friend of yours—

Helen [*nodding*]. He was a friend of mine.

Joyce. Uncle Edward has left his fortune to the family—[*breaking off*] you've been told already!

Helen. Well—yes.

Joyce. We haven't received our share yet; but we shall, as soon as it's all divided up. [*Timidly*] Helen . . .

[*HELEN seats herself upon the ottoman in an attitude of attention*]

I needn't tell you this will very much improve father and mother's position.

Helen. Naturally.

Joyce. And mine and Cyril's, too. I'm to finish abroad, I believe.

Helen. Lucky brat.

Joyce. But it's Cyril I want to talk to you about—my brother Cyril . . .

Helen. Cyril?

Joyce. Cyril is to be entered for one of the principal public schools.

Helen. Is he?

Joyce. One of those schools which stamp a boy a gentleman for the rest of his life.

Helen. He is a gentleman, as it is. I've a high opinion of Cyril.

Joyce. Oh, I am glad to hear you say so, because—because . . .

Helen. Because what? [*JOYCE turns away in silence to the settee by the piano*] What are you driving at, Joicey?

Joyce [*lounging on the settee uneasily and inelegantly*]. Of course, Cyril's only fourteen at present; there's no denying that.

Helen. I suppose there isn't.

Joyce. But in three years' time he'll be seventeen, and in another three he'll be twenty.

Helen [*puzzled*]. Well?

Joyce. And at twenty you're a man, aren't you?

Helen. A young man.

Joyce [*seating herself, her elbows on her*

knees, examining her fingers]. And even then he'd be content to wait.

Helen. To wait? What for?

Joyce [*in a low voice*]. Cyril wishes to marry you some day, Helen.

Helen [*after a pause, gently*]. Does he?

Joyce. He consulted me about it soon after you came to us, and I advised him to be quite sure of himself before he spoke to you. And he *is*, quite sure of himself.

Helen. And he's asked you to speak for him?

Joyce. He prefers my doing it. [*Looking, under her lashes, at HELEN*] Are you furious?

Helen. Not a scrap.

Joyce [*transferring herself from the settee to the floor at HELEN's feet—embracing her*]. Oh, that's lovely of you! I was afraid you might be.

Helen. Furious?

Joyce [*gazing at her admiringly*]. At our aiming so high. I was afraid you might consider that marrying Cyril would be marrying beneath you.

Helen [*tenderly*]. The girl who marries Cyril will have to be a far grander person than I am, Joyce, to be marrying beneath her.

Joyce. Oh, Cyril's all right in himself, and so is father. Father's very retiring, but he's as clever a musician as any in the midlands. And mother is all right in herself. [*Backing away from HELEN*] It's not mother's fault; it's her misfortune . . .

Helen. Her misfortune . . . ?

Joyce [*bitterly*]. Oh, I'll be bound they mentioned it at "Ivanhoe" or at the Crescent.

Helen. Mentioned . . . ?

Joyce [*between her teeth*]. The shop—grandfather's shop . . .

Helen. Ah, yes.

Joyce [*clenching her hands*]. Ah! [*Squatting upon her heels, her shoulders hunched*] Grandfather was a grocer, Helen—a grocer. Oh, mother has suffered terribly through it—agonies.

Helen. Poor mother!

Joyce. We've all suffered. Sometimes it's been as much as Cyril and I could do to keep our heads up; [*proudly, with flashing eyes*] but we've done it. The Singlehampton people are beasts.

Helen. Joyce!

Joyce. If it's the last word I ever utter—

beasts. [*Swallowing a tear*] And only half of it was grocery—only half.

Helen. Only half—?

Joyce. It was a double shop. There were two windows; the other half was bottles of wine. They forget that; they forget that!

Helen. A shame.

Joyce [*embracing HELEN again*]. What shall I say to him, then?

Helen. Say to him?

Joyce. Cyril—what answer shall I give him?

Helen. Oh, tell Cyril that I am highly complimented by his offer—

Joyce [*eagerly*]. Complimented—yes . . . ?

Helen. And that, if he's of the same mind when he's a man, and I am still single, he may propose to me again.

Joyce [*in alarm*]. If you're—still single . . . ?

Helen. Yes—[*shaking her head*] and if he's of the same mind.

[*There is a sharp, prolonged rapping on the door. JOYCE and HELEN rise*]

Joyce [*going to the door*]. It's that frightful tease.

[*She opens the door, and TRIST enters, carrying his hat, gloves, and walking-stick*]

Trist. Ladies, I have reason to believe that several choice specimens of the *Dianthus Caryophyllus* refuse to raise their heads until you grace the flower-show with your presence.

[*JOYCE slaps his hand playfully and disappears. HELEN takes her hat from the round table and, standing before the mirror at the mantelpiece, pins it on her head. TRIST watches her*]

Helen [*after a silence, her back to TRIST*]. The glass reflects more than one face, Mr. Trist.

Trist [*moving*]. I beg your pardon.

Helen. You were thinking . . . ?

Trist. Philosophizing—observing your way of putting on your hat.

Helen. I put it on carelessly?

Trist. Quickly. A convincing sign of youth. After you are five-and-twenty the process will take at least ten minutes.

Helen. And at thirty?

Trist. Half an hour. Add another half-hour for each succeeding decade—

Helen [*turning to him*]. I'm afraid you're a knowing, worldly parson.

Trist [laughing]. No, no; a tolerant, human parson.

Helen. We shall see. [Picking up her gloves] If ever you get a living in London, Mr. Trist, I shall make a point of sitting under you.

Trist. I bind you to that.

Helen [pulling on a glove]. By-the-bye, I set out to seek my London living to-morrow.

Trist [with a change of manner]. To-morrow?

Helen. To-morrow.

Trist [blankly]. I—I'm sorry.

Helen. Very polite of you. I'm glad.

Trist. Glad?

Helen. It sounds rather unkind, doesn't it? Oh, I'm extremely fond of everybody in this house—Mr. and Mrs. Tad and the children, I mean. But I'm sure it isn't good, morally, for me to be here, even if there were no other reasons for my departure.

Trist. Morally?

Helen. Yes; if I remained here, all that's bad in my nature would come out on top. Do you know that I've the makings in me of a most accomplished liar and hypocrite?

Trist. I shouldn't have suspected it.

Helen. I have. [Coming nearer to him] What do you think takes place this afternoon?

Trist. What?

Helen [with gradually increasing excitement]. There's to be a meeting of the Mortimore family at James Mortimore's house at four o'clock. He and his brother Stephen have just informed me, with the delicacy which is characteristic of them, that they are going to arrange with the lawyers to administer my father's estate without any more delay. And I was double-faced enough to receive the news smilingly and agreeably, and all the time I could have struck them—I could have seen them drop dead in this room without a pang of regret—

Trist. No, no—

Helen. I could. [Walking away and pacing the room on the left] Oh, it isn't father's money I covet. I said so to the family in Linchpool, and I say it again. But I deceived myself.

Trist. Deceived yourself?

Helen. Deceived myself. I can't bear that father should have forgotten me. I can't bear it; I can't resign myself to it; I shall

never resign myself to it. I thought I should be able to, but I was mistaken. I told Mr. Thaddeus that I've been suffering no suspense this last month. It's a falsehood; I've been suffering intense suspense. I've been watching the posts, for letters from Elkin; I've been praying, daily, hourly, that something—anything—might be found to prove that father had remembered me. And I loathe these people, who step over me and stand between me and the being I loved best on earth; I loathe them. I detest the whole posse of them, except the Thaddeuses; and I wish this money may bring them, and those belonging to them, every ill that's conceivable. [Confronting TRIST, her bosom heaving] Don't you lecture me.

Trist [good-humoredly]. I haven't the faintest intention of doing so.

Helen. Ha! [At the piano, mimicking JAMES] Here's Gordon Street—

Trist. Eh?

Helen. You come along here, to Albert Terrace—taking in Clark's piano factory—

Trist. Who does?

Helen [fiercely]. Here—here's the pub at the corner!

Trist [bewildered]. I—I don't—

Helen [speaking to him across the piano]. James Mortimore is buying land and building a new street in the town.

Trist. Really?

Helen. And Stephen is putting twelve thousand pounds into his old-fashioned paper, to freshen it up; and the Pontings are moving into a big house in London—near Berkeley Square, as James calls it; and they must needs discuss their affairs in my hearing, brutes that they are! [Coming to the chair on the left of the table at the end of the piano] Oh, thank God, I'm leaving the town to-morrow! It was only a sort of curiosity that brought me here. [Sitting and producing her handkerchief] Thank God, I'm leaving to-morrow!

[TRIST walks to the window on the right to allow her to recover herself, and then returns to her]

Trist. My dear child, may I speak quite plainly to you?

Helen [wiping her eyes]. If you don't lecture me.

Trist. I won't lecture you. I merely venture to suggest that you are a trifle illogical.

Helen. I dare say.

Trist. After all, recollect, our friends

James and Stephen are not to be blamed for the position they find themselves in.

Helen. Their manners are insufferable.

Trist. Hardly insufferable. Nothing is insufferable.

Helen. There you go!

Trist. Their faults of manner and breeding are precisely the faults a reasonable, dispassionate person would have no difficulty in excusing. And I shall be much astonished, when the bitterness of your mortification has worn off—

Helen. You are lecturing!

Trist. I'm not; I give you my word I'm not.

Helen. It sounds uncommonly like it. What did I tell you the other day—that you were different from the clergymen I'd met hitherto, because you were—?

Trist. Jolly.

Helen [with a shrug]. Jolly! [Wearily] Oh, please go and hurry the children up, and let's be off to the flowers.

Trist [not stirring]. My dear Miss Thornhill—

Helen [impatiently]. I'll fetch them—

Trist. Don't. [Deliberately] My dear Miss Thornhill, to show you how little I regard myself as worthy of the privilege of lecturing you; [smiling] to show you how the seeds of selfishness may germinate and flourish even in the breast of a cleric—may I make a confession to you?

Helen. Confession—?

Trist. I—I want to confess to you that the circumstance of your having been left as you are—cast adrift on the world, unprotected, without means apart from your own talent and exertions—is one that fills me with—hope.

Helen. Hope?

Trist. Fills me with hope, though it may scarcely justify my presumption. [Sitting opposite to her] You were assuming a minute ago, in joke perhaps, the possibility of my obtaining a living some day.

Helen [graciously, but with growing uneasiness]. Not altogether in joke.

Trist. Anyhow, there is a decided possibility of a living coming my way—and practically in London, as it chances.

Helen. I—I'm pleased.

Trist. Yes, in the natural order of events a living will be vacant within the next few years which is in the gift of the father of an old college chum of mine. It's a suburban

parish—close to Twickenham—and I'm promised it.

Helen. That would be—nice for you.

Trist [gazing at her fixedly]. Jolly.

Helen [her eyes drooping]. Very—jolly.

Trist. I should still be a poor man—that I shall always be; but poverty is relative. It would be riches compared with my curacy here. [After a pause] The vicarage has a garden with some grand old trees.

Helen. Many of the old gardens—in the suburbs—are charming.

Trist. I—I could let the vicarage during the summer, to increase my income.

Helen. May a vicar—let—his vicarage?

Trist. It's done. Some Bishops object to it; [innocently] but you can dodge the old boy.

Helen. Dodge the—old boy!

Trist. There are all sorts of legal fictions to help you. I know of a Bishop's son-in-law who let his vicarage for a term under the pretence of letting only the furniture.

Helen. Wicked.

Trist [leaning forward]. But I shouldn't dream of letting my vicarage if my income—proved sufficient . . .

Helen. It would be wealth—you say—in comparison—

Trist. Yes, but I—I might—marry.

Helen [hastily]. Oh—oh, of course.

[The door opens, and JOYCE and CYRIL enter, dressed for going out. CYRIL is in his best suit, is gloved, and swings a cane which is too long for him. At the same moment THADDEUS lets himself into the garden at the gate. He is accompanied by DENYER, an ordinary-looking person with whiskers and moustache. HELEN and TRIST rise, and she goes to the mirror in some confusion, and gives a last touch to her hat]

Joyce. Have we kept you waiting?

Cyril. Sorry. Couldn't get my tie to go right.

Thaddeus [in the garden]. Come in, Denyer. [At the window, to those in the room] What, haven't you folks gone yet?

Trist [with the children, following HELEN into the garden]. Just off.

Thaddeus [to HELEN, as she passes him] Hope you'll enjoy yourself.

Trist [to DENYER]. Ah, Mr. Denyer, how are you?

Denyer. How are you, Mr. Trist?

Joyce and Cyril [to THADDEUS]. Good-bye, father.

Thaddeus [kissing them]. Good-bye, my dears.

[TRIST opens the gate, and HELEN and the children pass out into the lane.

TRIST follows them, closing the gate.

THADDEUS and DENYER enter the room. DENYER is carrying a newspaper]

Cyril [out of sight, shrilly]. Which way?

Trist [out of sight]. Through Parker Street.

Joyce [out of sight]. Who walks with who?

Helen [out of sight]. I walk with Cyr'l.

[The sound of the chatter dies in the distance]

Denyer [to Thaddeus]. Then I can put up the bill at once, Mr. Mortimore?

Thaddeus [laying his hat upon the table on the left]. Do, Denyer. To-morrow—to-day—

Denyer. I'll send a man round in the morning. [Producing a note-book and writing in it] Let's see—your lease is seven, fourteen, twenty-one?

Thaddeus. That's it.

Denyer. How much of the first seven is there to run—I ought to remember . . . ?

Thaddeus. Two years and a half from Michaelmas.

Denyer. Rent?

Thaddeus. Forty.

[The door opens a little way and PHYLLIS peeps in. Her features are drawn, her lips white and set]

Denyer. Fixtures at a valuation, I s'pose?

Thaddeus. Ha, ha! The costly fixtures at a valuation.

Denyer. You may as well sell 'em, if they only fetch tuppence.

[He sees PHYLLIS, who has entered softly]

Good afternoon, ma'am.

Phyllis [in a low voice]. Good afternoon.

Thaddeus [turning to her]. Phyl, dear! I met Mr. Denyer in the lane. [Gleefully] The bill goes up to-morrow—"house to let"—to-morrow morning—[to DENYER] first thing—

[PHYLLIS moves to the bay-window without speaking]

Denyer. First thing. [Putting his pocket-book away] Excuse me—you're on the lookout for a new residence?

Thaddeus. Oh—er—one must live somewhere, Denyer.

Denyer. And a much superior house to this, Mr. Mortimore, I lay a guinea.

Thaddeus [walking about with his hands in his pockets]. The children are springing up—getting to be tremendous people.

Denyer [genially]. Oh, come, sir! We know.

Thaddeus [pausing in his walk]. Eh?

Denyer. Everybody in the town knows of your luck, and the family's. [Picking up his hat and newspaper, which he has laid upon the ottoman] Here's another allusion to it in this week's Courier.

Thaddeus. The Courier?

Denyer [handing him the paper]. Just out. You keep it; I've got another at 'ome.

[THADDEUS is searching the paper] Middle page—"Town Topics."

Thaddeus. Thanks.

Denyer. Mr. Hammond—he will poke his fun. [Going to the window] P'raps you'll give us a call, sir?

Thaddeus [following him absently, reading]. Yes, I'll call in.

[DENYER turns to PHYLLIS, who is sitting in the chair by the bay-window]

Denyer. Good-day, ma'am. [In the garden, to THADDEUS, persuasively] Now you won't forget Gibson and Denyer, Mr. Mortimore?

Thaddeus [at the window]. I won't; I won't.

Denyer. The old firm. [Opening the gate] What we haven't got on our books isn't worth considering, you take it from me.

[He disappears, closing the gate. THADDEUS comes back into the room]

Thaddeus. Upon my soul, this is too bad of Hammond. This'll annoy Jim and Stephen frightfully—drive 'em mad. [Flinging the paper on to the settee by the piano] Oh, well . . . ! [Putting his necktie in order at the mirror] By Jove, we've done it at last, old lady! "House to let," hey? I believe I'm keener about it than you are, now it's come to it. What a sensation it'll cause at "Ivanhoe," and at the Crescent! I tell you what, you and I must have a solemn talk to-night—a parliament—when the children have gone to bed; a regular, serious talk. [Turning] You know, I'm still for Cheltenham. Cheltenham seems to me to offer so many advantages.

[PHYLLIS rises slowly]

There's the town itself—bright and healthy; then the College, for Cyril. As for its musical tastes—*[Breaking off and looking at the clock]* I say, do get your things on, Phyl. *[Comparing his watch with the clock and then timing and winding it]* We shall catch it if we're not punctual.

Phyllis. I—I'm not going, Tad.

Thaddeus. Not going, dear?

Phyllis. No—I . . . *[He advances to the right of the piano solicitously]* I can't go.

Thaddeus. Aren't you up to it?

[She moves to the open window and looks into the garden]

Phyllis. They won't—be back—for a long while?

Thaddeus. The children, and Trist and Helen? Not for an hour or two.

Phyllis *[turning]*. Tad—that girl—that girl . . .

Thaddeus. Helen?

Phyllis *[coming forward a little]*. We're robbing her; we're robbing her. *[Shaking]* We're all robbing her.

Thaddeus *[at her side]*. You've got another bad attack of nerves this afternoon—an extra bad one—

Phyllis *[suddenly, grasping his coat]*. Tad—I—I've broken down . . .

Thaddeus. Broken down?

Phyllis. I've broken down under it. I—I can't endure it.

Thaddeus *[soothingly]*. What—what—?

Phyllis. Your brother—Edward—your brother—Edward . . .

Thaddeus. Yes?

Phyllis. Everything—everything—belongs to her—Helen . . .

Thaddeus. My dear, the family were prepared to offer Helen—

Phyllis. No, no! He left every penny to her—left it to her. *[Staring into his face]* There was a will.

Thaddeus. A will?

Phyllis. I saw it.

Thaddeus. You saw it?

Phyllis. I read it—I had it in my hand . . .

Thaddeus *[incredulously]*. You did!

Phyllis. Yes, I—I did away with it . . .

Thaddeus. Did away with it?

Phyllis. Destroyed it.

Thaddeus. A will—Ned's will . . .

[PHYLLIS turns from him and sinks helplessly on to the settee by the fireplace. THADDEUS stands looking down

upon her in a half-frightened, half-puzzled way; then his face clears, and he looks at the clock again and speaks calmly]

Phyl, I wish you'd let me have Chapman in.

Phyllis *[in a faint voice]*. No—no—

Thaddeus. My dear, we can afford a doctor now, if we require one. That bromide stuff he prescribed for you once—that did you no end of good. *[Going towards the door]* I'll send Kate.

Phyllis *[raising herself]*. Tad . . .

Thaddeus *[reassuringly]*. I'll stay with you till he comes.

Phyllis. Tad—*[getting to her feet]* you—you think I'm not right in my head. Tad, I—I know what I'm saying. I'm telling the truth. I'm telling you the truth.

Thaddeus. A will . . . ?

Phyllis *[at the round table]*. Yes—yes—

Thaddeus. No, no, you're talking nonsense. *[He goes to the door and there pauses, his hand on the doorknob]* When—when . . . ?

Phyllis. When . . . ?

Thaddeus. When did you see it?

Phyllis. On the—on the Wednesday night.

Thaddeus. The Wednesday night?

Phyllis. You remember—the night there was no night-nurse . . . ?

Thaddeus. I remember, of course.

Phyllis. Ann and Louisa had gone to the hotel to lie down, and—and I was alone with him.

Thaddeus. I remember it all perfectly.

Phyllis *[moving towards the ottoman, supporting herself by the table]*. I was with him from eight o'clock till nearly eleven.

Thaddeus. Till the others came back. That was the night he—the night he sank.

Phyllis. Yes; it was just before then that he—that he . . .

Thaddeus *[leaving the door]*. Just before then . . . ?

Phyllis. It was just before the change set in that he—that he sent me downstairs.

Thaddeus. Downstairs?

Phyllis. To the library.

Thaddeus. The library?

Phyllis. With the keys.

Thaddeus. Keys?

Phyllis. His bunch of keys.

Thaddeus. Sent you downstairs—to the library—with his keys?

Phyllis. Yes.

Thaddeus. What for?

Phyllis. To fetch something.

Thaddeus. Fetch something?

Phyllis. From the safe.

Thaddeus. The safe?

Phyllis. The safe in the library—[*sitting on the ottoman*] the safe in the bookcase in the library.

Thaddeus [*coming to her*]. What—what did he send you to fetch, dear?

Phyllis. Some—some jewelry.

Thaddeus. Jewelry?

Phyllis. Some pieces of jewelry. He had some pieces of jewelry in his safe in the library, that he'd picked up, he said, at odd times, and he wanted to make me a present of one of them . . .

Thaddeus. Make you a present . . . ?

Phyllis. As a keepsake. [*Her elbows on her knees, digging her fingers into her hair*] He was about half-past nine. I was sitting beside his bed, thinking he was asleep, and I found him looking at me. He recollected seeing me when I was a child, he said, skating on the ponds at Claybrook; and he said he was sure I—I was a good wife to you—and a good mother to my children. And then he spoke of the jewelry—and opened the drawer of the table by the bed—and took out his keys—and explained to me how to open the safe.

Thaddeus [*his manner gradually changing as he listens to her recital*]. You—you went down . . . ?

Phyllis. Yes.

Thaddeus. And—and . . . ?

Phyllis. And unlocked the safe. And in the lower drawer I—I came across it.

Thaddeus. Came across . . . ?

Phyllis. He told me I should find four small boxes—and I could find only three—and that made me look into the drawer—and—and under a lot of other papers—I—I saw it.

Thaddeus. It?

Phyllis. A big envelope, with "My Will" written upon it.

[*There is a short silence; then THADDEUS seats himself upon the settee by the piano*]

Thaddeus [*in a whisper*]. Well?

Phyllis [*raising her head*]. I put it back into the drawer, and locked the safe, and went up-stairs with the jewelry. Outside the bedroom door I found Heath. I'd given him permission to run out for an hour, to get

some air, with Pearce and Sadler, the housemaids. He asked me if they could do anything for me before they started. I told him No, and that Mr. Mortimore seemed brighter and stronger. I heard him going down the servant's staircase; and then I went into the room—up to the bed—and—and he was altered.

Thaddeus [*moistening his lips with his tongue*]. Ned . . . ?

Phyllis. His cheeks were more shrunken, and his jaw had dropped slightly, and his lips were quite blue; and his breathing was short and quick. I measured the medicine which he was to have if there was any sign of collapse, and lifted him up and gave it to him. Then I rang the bell, and by and by the woman from the kitchen answered it. He was easier then—dozing, but I told her to put on her hat and jacket and go for Dr. Oswald. And then I stood watching him, and—and the idea—came to me.

Thaddeus. The—the idea?

Phyllis. My head suddenly became very clear. Every word of the argument in the train came back to me—

Thaddeus. Argument?

Phyllis. Between James and the others—in the train, going to Linchpool, on the Tuesday—

Thaddeus. Oh—oh, yes.

Phyllis. If Edward died, how much would he die worth? Who would come in for all his money? Would he remember the family, to the extent of a mourning ring or so, in his will? If he should die leaving *no will*! Of course Ned would leave a will, but—where did a man's money go to when he *didn't* leave a will?

Thaddeus [*under his breath*]. To his—next-of-kin . . . !

Phyllis [*rising painfully*]. After a time, I—I went downstairs again. At first I persuaded myself that I only wanted to replace the jewelry—that I didn't want to have to explain about the jewelry to Ann and Lou; [*moving about the room on the left*] but when I got downstairs, I *knew* what I was going to do. And I did it as if it was the most ordinary thing in the world. I put back the little boxes—and took out the big envelope—and locked up the safe again, and—read the will. [*Pausing at the piano*] Everything—everything—to some person—some woman living in Paris. [*Leaning upon the piano, a clenched hand against*

her brow] "Everything I die possessed of to Helen Thornhill, now or late of—" such-and-such an address, "spinster, absolutely"; and she was to be his executrix—"sole executrix." That was all, except that he begged her to reward his old servants—his old servants at his house and at the brewery. Just a few lines—on one side of a sheet of paper—

Thaddeus. Written—in his own—hand?

Phyllis. I think so.

Thaddeus. You—you've seen his writing—since . . .

Phyllis [*leaving the piano*]. Yes—I'm sure—in his own hand.

Thaddeus [*heavily*]. That clears it up, then.

Phyllis. Yes.

Thaddeus. He'd made his will—himself—himself . . .

Phyllis [*her strength failing a little*]. Three years ago. I—noticed the date—[*dropping into the chair on the extreme left*] it was three years ago . . .

[*Again there is a silence; then THADDEUS rises and walks about aimlessly*]

Thaddeus [*trying to collect his thoughts*]. Yes—yes; this clears it up. This clears it all up. There was a will. There was a will. He didn't forget his child; he didn't forget her. What fools—what fools we were to suppose he could have forgotten his daughter!

Phyllis [*writhing in her chair*]. Oh, I didn't know—I didn't guess . . .! His daughter! [*Moaning*] Oh! oh!

Thaddeus. Don't; don't, old lady.

[*She continues her moaning*]

Oh, don't, don't! Let's think; let's think, now; let's think. [*He seats himself opposite to her*] Now, let's think. Helen—this'll put Helen in a different position entirely; a different position entirely—won't it? I—I wonder—I wonder what's the proper course for the family to take. [*Stretching out a trembling hand to her*] You'll have to write down—to write down carefully—very carefully—[*Breaking off, with a change of tone*] Phyl . . .

Phyllis. Oh! oh!

Thaddeus. Don't, dear, don't! Phyllis, perhaps you—didn't destroy the will; not—actually—destroy it? [*Imploringly*] You didn't destroy it, dear!

Phyllis. I did—I did—

Thaddeus [*leaning back in his chair,*

dazed]. I—I'm afraid—it—it's rather—a serious matter—to—to destroy—

Phyllis [*starting up*]. I did destroy it; I did destroy it. [*Pacing the room on the right*] I kept it—I'd have burnt it then and there if there'd been a fire—but I kept it—I grew terrified at what I'd done—oh, I kept it till you left me at Roper's on the Thursday morning; and then I—I went on to the Ford Street bridge—and tore it into pieces—and threw them into the water. [*Wringing her hands*] Oh! oh!

Thaddeus [*his chin on his breast*]. Well—well—we've got to go through with it. We've got—to go—through— [*Rising and walking about unsteadily on the left*] Yes, yes, yes; what a difference it'll make to everybody—not only to Helen! What a difference it'll make at "Ivanhoe," and at the Crescent—and to Rose . . .!

Phyllis. They'll curse me! They'll curse me more than ever!

Thaddeus. And to—to us!

Phyllis. To us—the children . . .!

Thaddeus [*shaking a finger at her across the piano, cunningly*]. Ah—ah—ah, but when the affair's really settled, we'll still carry out our intention. We—we'll still . . .

Phyllis [*facing him*]. Our intention? Our—?

Thaddeus. Our intention—of leaving the town—

Phyllis [*wildly*]. Leaving the town! Oh, my God, we shall have to leave the town!

Thaddeus [*recoiling*]. Oh . . .!

Phyllis. Leave it as beggars and outcasts!

Thaddeus [*quietly*]. Oh, yes, we shall—have—to leave the town—now . . .

[*The door opens and a little maid-servant enters. THADDEUS looks at her with dull eyes*]

The Servant. Please, sir . . .

Thaddeus. Eh?

The Servant. Maud's just come down from "Ivanhoe." They're waiting for you.

Thaddeus. W—waiting?

The Servant. That's the message, sir. Mr. James and the family's waiting for Mr. Thaddeus.

Thaddeus. Oh, I . . . [*Taking out his watch and fingering it*] Yes, of course—[*To the servant*] I—I'm coming up.

[*The servant withdraws. THADDEUS picks up his hat from the table on the left and turns to PHYLLIS*]

Good-bye, dear. [*Taking her in his arms, and kissing her, simply*] I—I'll go up. [*He puts his hat on, finds his way to the door with uncertain steps, and disappears*]

ACT THREE

The dining-room in JAMES MORTIMORE'S house in Singlehampton. In the rear wall there is an arched recess with a fireplace at the back of it, and on either side of the fireplace, within the recess, there is a chimney-seat. On the right of the recess a door opens into the room from a hall or passage.

Standing out in the middle of the room is a large, oblong dining-table, uncovered. On the table are a couple of inkstands, some pens, paper, and blotting-paper. Ten chairs are placed at regular intervals at the table—three at each side and two at the ends. Against the wall on the right, near the door, stands a heavy sideboard. On it are several pieces of ugly-looking, showy plate, a carafe of water and a tumbler, and, upon a tray, a decanter of red wine and some wine-glasses. Against the same wall there is a cabinet. In front of the cabinet there is a round table, covered with a white cloth, on which teacups and saucers are laid for ten persons. Also on the table are a tea-caddy and teapot, a plated kettle-stand, a plum-cake, and other accompaniments of afternoon tea. On each side of the tea-table there is an armchair belonging to the same set of chairs that surround the dining-table.

Against the left-hand wall is another heavy piece of furniture. Except for this, and the sideboard and the cabinet, the walls, below the dado rail, are bare.

The architecture, decorations, and furniture are pseudo-artistic and vulgar. The whole suggests the home of a common person of moderate means who has built himself a "fine house."

JAMES and STEPHEN are seated at the further side of the dining-table with a newspaper spread out before them. Standing by them, reading the paper over their husbands' shoulders, are ANN and LOUISA. ROSE is sitting, looking bored, at the right-hand end of the table, and PONTING, smoking a cigar, is pacing the room on the left. LOUISA and ROSE, the latter dressed in rich half-mourning, are wearing their hats.

James [*scowling at the paper*]. It's infamous.

Louisa. Abominable!

Ann. It oughtn't to be allowed, James.

Stephen. Ah, now James is stabbed at as well as myself.

James. The man's a blackguard; that's what he is.

Louisa. His wife's a most unpleasant woman.

Stephen [*leaning back and wiping his spectacles*]. Hitherto I have been the chief object of Mr. Hammond's malice.

Louisa. You'll soon have your revenge now, Stephen. [*To the others*] Stephen will soon have his revenge now.

James. By George, I've half a mind to ask Vallance to give me his opinion on this!

Stephen. We might consult Vallance, certainly.

Louisa. And tell him what Mrs. Hammond was.

Ann. When she was plain Nelly Robson.

Stephen. Sssh, sssh! Do, pray, keep the wife out of it.

Ponting [*looking at his watch as he walks across to the right*]. I say, my friends, it's four o'clock, you know.

[*The MORTIMORES stiffen themselves and regard him coldly*]

Where are these lawyer chaps?

James [*folding the newspaper*]. They're not in my pocket, Colonel.

Stephen. No, we're not in the habit of carrying them about with us.

Louisa [*laughing silyly*]. Oh, Stephen!

Rose. We mustn't lose the—what's the train back, Toby?

Ponting [*behind her chair, annoyed*]. Five fifty-seven.

Rose. I shall be dead with fatigue; I've two parties to-night.

James. Parties?

Rose [*to PONTING*]. Destinn is singing at the Trench's, Toby.

Stephen [*rising*]. H'm! Indeed?

Ann [*in an undertone, withdrawing with LOUISA to the fireplace*]. Singing!

James [*rising*]. So you're going to parties, are you, Rose? Pretty sharp work, with Ned only a month in his grave.

Ponting. We're not conventional people.

Rose [*rising and walking away to the left*]. No, we don't mourn openly.

Ponting. We don't carry our hearts on our what-d'ye-call-it—sleeve.

Rose. And Edward wasn't in the least known in London society.

James [*walking about on the right*]. You knew him.

Ponting [*seating himself on the nearer side of the dining-table in the middle chair*]. In London, my friends, reg'lar mournin' is confined to the suburbs nowadays. May I have an ash-tray?

Rose [*walking about on the left*]. And we go to Harrogate on the twenty-ninth.

Ponting. Good Lord, yes; I'm kept devilish quiet there.

[*ANN takes a metal ash-tray from the mantelpiece and gives it to STEPHEN, who almost flings it on to the table. The door opens, and a maid-servant enters followed by ELKIN and VALLANCE. The lawyers carry small leather bags. The servant retires*]

James [*shaking hands heartily with ELKIN and VALLANCE*]. Here you are!

Elkin. A minute or two behind time—my fault.

Stephen. How d'ye do, Mr. Elkin? [*Shaking hands with VALLANCE*] Good-afternoon.

Elkin [*to PONTING*]. How d'ye do?

Ponting [*shortly, not rising*]. H'ah you?

Vallance [*shaking hands with ANN and LOUISA and bowing to ROSE*]. How do you do?

Elkin [*to ROSE*]. Hope you're very well, Mrs. Ponting.

Rose. Thanks.

Vallance [*to PONTING*]. Good-afternoon.

[*PONTING nods in return*]

Ponting [*bringing the palm of his hand down upon the table*]. Now, then!

James [*to ELKIN and VALLANCE, inviting them by a gesture to be seated*]. Excuse the dining-room, gentlemen; looks more like business than the drawing-room.

Stephen [*on the left*]. Where's Tad?

Ann [*seating herself at the further side of the dining-table in the middle chair*]. Yes, where's Tad?

Louisa [*sitting beside her*]. Where are Tad and Phyllis?

James [*looking at his watch*]. Five past, by my watch.

Rose [*sitting at the left-hand end of the table*]. Oh, never mind them.

James [*to STEPHEN*]. Praps you told 'em four-thirty?

Stephen [*nettled*]. Perhaps I told them! *James.* All right, all right; don't flare up! Praps I did; there was a talk of making it half-past.

Stephen [*raising his arms*]. On the day I go to press—

James. Ring the bell. [*Opening the door and calling*] Maud! Maud!

[*STEPHEN rings the bell. ELKIN and VALLANCE are now seated, ELKIN in the further chair at the right-hand end of the dining-table, VALLANCE in the chair between ELKIN and ANN. They open their bags and sort and arrange their papers*]

Ponting. We shall be here till midnight.

James. Maud—!

Rose [*pushing her chair away from the table*]. How vexing!

Ponting [*with a sneer*]. I suppose one can buy a soot of pyjamas in the town, eh, Mrs. James?

Elkin. I sha'n't detain you long.

[*The servant appears at the door*]

James. Maud, run down to Nelson Villas—just as you are—

Rose [*satirically*]. Don't hurry them, Jim. Phyllis is smartening herself up.

Stephen [*seating himself in the further chair at the left-hand end of the dining-table, loudly*]. Say we are waiting for Mr. Thaddeus.

James [*to the girl*]. Mr. James and the family are waiting for Mr. Thaddeus. [*As he closes the door*] Go along Collier Street; you may meet him.

Ponting [*fussily*]. We can deal with preliminaries, at any rate. Kindly push that ash-tray a little nearer. [*To VALLANCE*] Mr. Vallance—

James [*leaving the door, resenting PONTING's assumption of authority*]. I beg your pardon, Colonel; we'll give my brother another five minutes' grace, with your permission.

Ponting [*shrugging his shoulders*]. By all means—ten—twenty . . .

James [*finding that he has the newspaper in his hand*]. Oh—here . . . ! [*Opening the paper*] While we're waiting for Tad—

Stephen. Ah, yes. Read it aloud, Jim.

Ponting [*rising and moving away impatiently*]. Tsch!

James. Mr. Vallance—Mr. Elkin—oblige us by listening to this. It's from the *Courier*.

Stephen. This week's *Courier*—published to-day—

Vallance [to ELKIN]. One of our local papers.

James. Owned by a feller o' the name of Hammond. [Reading] "Town Topics."

Ann. He married a Miss Robson.

Louisa. A dreadful woman.

Stephen. Sssh, sssh! Mr. Hammond's offensive remarks are usually directed against myself, but in this instance—

James [walking about as he reads]. "A curious complication arises in connection with the estate of the late Mr. Edward Mortimore of Linchpool."

Stephen. He doesn't cloak his attack, you see.

James. "As many of our readers are aware—[running his hands over his pockets] as many of our readers are aware—"

Stephen. He has made them aware of it.

James [to ANN]. Where did I put them, mother?

Ann [producing her spectacles]. Try mine, James.

[ANN gives her spectacles to STEPHEN, STEPHEN gives them to ROSE, and ROSE presents them to JAMES]

James. I'm getting as bleary-eyed as Stephen. [Resuming] "As many of our readers are aware, the whole of that gentleman's wealth passes, in consequence of his having died intestate, to a well-known Singlehampton family—"

Louisa. That points to us.

Stephen [irritably]. Of course it does; of course it does.

Louisa. There's no better-known family in Singlehampton than ours.

Stephen. Sssh, sssh!

James. "— two members of which—"

Ann. The Mockfords were an older family—but where are the Mockfords?

James [to ANN]. Give me a chance, Ann. [Continuing] "— two members of which have been for many years prominently associated with the temperance movement in this town."

Stephen [rising]. My brother James and myself.

James [standing at the table, facing ELKIN and VALLANCE, in his oratorical manner]. Twelve years ago, gentlemen, I was instrumental in founding the Singlehampton and Claybrook Temperance League—

Louisa. Stephen was another of the founders.

Stephen [joining JAMES]. I was another.

James. And day in and day out I have devoted my best energies to furthering the objects of the League in Singlehampton and in Claybrook.

Stephen. Very materially aided by the *Times and Mirror*, a temperance organ.

James. And I submit that it's holding us up to ridicule and contempt—holding us up to public obloquy and derisions—

Vallance [to JAMES]. What is your objection to the paragraph, Mr. Mortimore?

James. Objection!

Elkin. There's more to come, I expect.

James [grimly]. Aye, a bit more. [Sitting at the table] What d'ye think of this? [Reading] "When it is remembered that the late Mr. Mortimore's fortune was derived from the brewing and the sale of beer—"

Stephen [sitting beside JAMES]. The word "beer" is in italics.

Vallance. Oh, I see.

James. "— it will be understood that our two distinguished fellow-townsmen are placed in an extremely difficult position."

Stephen. This is the most spiteful part of it.

James. "We have no doubt, however, that, as conscientious men, they will prove fully equal to the occasion by either renouncing their share of their late brother's property or by dedicating it entirely to the advancement of the cause they have at heart." [Throwing the newspaper to ELKIN and VALLANCE] There it is, gentlemen.

[In wandering round the room, PONTING has come upon the decanter of wine and the wine-glasses standing on the sideboard. He is now filling a glass]

Ponting. Every man has a right to his convictions. [Taking the glass in his hand] A little alcohol hurts nobody—

James. You won't find any in my house.

Ponting. What's this, then?

James. Currant.

Ponting [replacing the glass, with a wry face]. My dear Mortimore . . . !

[He sits at the right-hand end of the table, beside ELKIN, and pries at the documents which ELKIN has taken from his bag. VALLANCE and ELKIN are reading the paragraph together]

VALLANCE *drawing his chair closer to ELKIN's for that purpose*

James *[to VALLANCE]*. Well, what's your opinion, Mr. Vallance? Is that libelous, or isn't it?

Stephen. Does it, or does it not, go beyond the bounds of fair comment—eh, Mr. Elkin?

Vallance *[pacificallly]*. Oh, but aren't you attaching a great deal too much importance to this?

James. Too much . . . !

Elkin. Why not ignore it?

Stephen. Ignore it!

Vallance. Treat it as a piece of pure chaff—badinage . . .

Elkin. In more or less bad taste.

Vallance. Take no notice of it whatever.

James *[rising and walking away to the fireplace]*. Take no notice of it! The townspeople will take notice of it pretty quickly.

Stephen *[rising]*. In my opinion, that paragraph renders our position in the League absolutely untenable.

James *[standing over VALLANCE]*. Unless that paragraph is apologized for, withdrawn—

Stephen *[standing over ELKIN]*. Explained away—

James. Aye, explained away—

Vallance. I don't see how it can be explained away.

Elkin *[dryly]*. The proposition is a perfectly accurate one, whatever you may think of the corollary.

Vallance. You *are* ardent advocates of temperance.

Elkin. Your late brother's property was amassed mainly by beer.

Vallance. It can hardly be explained away.

Stephen *[walking to the left]*. Good heavens above, I've explained things away often enough in my paper!

James *[coming forward on the right]*. This does us at the League, then—does us; knocks our influence into a cocked hat.

Elkin *[to JAMES and STEPHEN]*. After all, gentlemen, when you come to reflect upon it, the laugh is with you.

James. Is it?

Elkin *[genially]*. The *Courier* has its little joke, but *you've* got the money, remember.

James. Oh, that's true.

Stephen *[walking about on the left]*. That's true; that's true.

James *[walking about on the right,*

ratling his loose cash]. Aye, we've got the mopuses.

Rose *[tilting her chair on its hind legs]*. I say, Jim—Stephen—why don't you two boys, between you, present the League with a handsome hail—?

James *[pausing in his walk]*. Hall?

Rose. Build the temperance folk a meeting-place of their own—a headquarters . . .

Ponting *[mischievously]*. He, he, he! That 'ud smooth 'em down. Capital idea, Rosie!

James and Stephen. We!

James. I'd see 'em damned first. *[To the ladies]* I beg pardon . . .

Ann *[with unusual animation]*. No, no; you're quite right, James.

Stephen *[at the fireplace]*. That would be playing into Mr. Hammond's hands with a vengeance.

James *[walking across to the left, derisively]*. Ha! Wouldn't Hammond crow, hey! Ha, ha, ha!

Stephen. No, if the situation becomes too acute—painful as it would be to me—I shall resign.

James *[determinedly]*. Resign.

Stephen. Sever my connection with the League.

James. Leave 'em to swill themselves with their lemonade and boiled tea!

Stephen *[coming forward on the right]*. And to find out how they get on without us.

James. Serve 'em up in their own juice!

Stephen *[meeting JAMES in the middle of the room on the nearer side of the dining-table]*. You know, Jim, we've never gone quite so far—you and I—with the principles of temperance as some.

James *[eyeing him curiously]*. Never gone so far . . . ?

Stephen. As old Bob Amphlett, for example—never.

James. Oh, yes, we have, and a deuced sight further.

Stephen. Excuse me—I've *always* been for moderation rather than for total abstinence.

James. Have yer? *[Walking away to the left]* First I've heard of it.

Stephen. Anyhow, a man may broaden his views with years and experience. *[Argumentatively]* Take the hygienic aspect of the case. Only the other day, Sir Vincent West, probably the ablest physician in England—

Louisa [abruptly]. Stephen!

Stephen [angrily]. Don't interrupt me.

Louisa [with energy, rising]. I've maintained it throughout my life—it's nothing new from my lips—

Stephen. What—?

Louisa. There are two sides to every question.

Stephen [hurrying round the table to join LOUISA]. Exactly—exactly—as Lou says—

Louisa. It's been almost a second religion with me. I've preached it in season and out of season—

Stephen [with conviction]. There are two sides—

Louisa. Two sides to every question.

James [to ANN, pointing to the door]. Mother . . .

[The door has been opened by another maid-servant, who carries a tray on which are a plated kettle, a dish of toast, and a plentiful supply of bread-and-butter. The girl remains in the doorway. ANN rises and goes to her and takes the kettle from the tray. JAMES comes forward and seats himself on the nearer side of the dining-table in the middle chair]

Look here; I don't wait another minute for the Tads—not a second.

Ponting. Ah!

[LOUISA follows ANN and takes the toast and the bread-and-butter from the servant, who then disappears, closing the door]

Stephen [again sitting in the further chair at the left-hand end of the dining-table]. Inexcusable of them—inexcusable.

[ANN and LOUISA come to the tea-table and, drawing the two armchairs up to it, seat themselves and prepare the tea. The kettle is set upon the stand, the spirit-lamp is lighted, ANN measures the tea from the caddy into the pot, and LOUISA cuts the plum-cake]

James. Mr. Elkin—Mr. Vallance—

Ponting. Now, Mr. Vallance; now, Mr. Elkin!

Elkin [to VALLANCE]. Will you . . . ?

Vallance. No, no—you . . .

Elkin. Well gentlemen—[to ROSE] Mrs. Ponting—Mr. Vallance and I have to report to you that we've received no communication of any kind in answer to our circulars and advertisements—

[ANN is making a clatter with the kettle]

James [to ANN]. Steady, mother.

Ponting [to the ladies at the tea-table]. Sssh, sssh, sssh!

Elkin. No communication from any solicitor who has prepared a will for your late brother, nor from anybody who has knowingly witnessed a will executed by him.

Stephen. Mr. Vallance has apprised us of this already.

James [raising a hand]. Order! There's a formal way of doing things and a lax way.

Stephen. I merely mentioned—

[PONTING raps the table sharply with his knuckles]

Elkin. I may say that, in addition to the issuing of the circulars and advertisements, I have made search in every place I could think of, and have inquired of every person likely to be of help in the matter. In fact, I've taken every possible step to find, or trace, a will.

Vallance. Without success.

Elkin. Without success.

James [magnanimously]. And I say that the family bears no grudge to Mr. Elkin for doing his duty.

Stephen [in the same spirit]. Hear, hear!

Ponting [testily]. Of course not; of course not.

Rose. It's all the more satisfactory, it seems to me, that he has worried round.

James. The family thanks Mr. Elkin.

Stephen. We thank Mr. Elkin.

Elkin [after a stiff inclination of the head]. The only other observation I wish to make is that several gentlemen employed in the office of the brewery in Linchpool have at different times witnessed the late Mr. Mortimore's signature to documents which have apparently required the attestation of two witnesses.

Ponting [curtly]. That amounts to nothing.

James. There are a good many documents, aren't there, where two witnesses are required to a signature?

Elkin. Deeds under seal, certainly.

Stephen. I remember having to sign, some years ago—

[PONTING again raps the table]

Vallance. But none of these gentlemen at the brewery can recall that any particular document appeared to him to be a will, which is not a document under seal.

James. Besides, a man signing a will always tells the witnesses that it is his will they're witnessing, doesn't he, Mr. Vallance?

Vallance. A solicitor would, in the ordinary course of practice, inform the witnesses to a will of the nature of the document they were attesting, undoubtedly.

Elkin. Granted; but a testator, supposing he were executing his will in his own house or office, and not in the presence of a solicitor, is under no legal necessity to do so, and may omit to do so.

James [rolling about in his chair]. Oh, well, we needn't—

Ponting [looking at his watch]. In heaven's name—!

Stephen. We needn't go into all this.

Elkin. No, no; I simply draw attention to the point. [Unfolding a document] Well, gentlemen—Mrs. Ponting—this is a statement—[handing another document to VALLANCE] here is a copy of it, Mr. Vallance—this is a statement of particulars of stocks, shares, and other items of estate, with their values at the death of the late Mr. Mortimore, and a schedule of the debts so far as they are known to me.

[There is a general movement. JAMES rises and goes to VALLANCE. STEPHEN also rises, stretching out an eager hand towards VALLANCE. ROSE draws nearer to the table, PONTING still closer to ELKIN. ANN and LOUISA, too, show a disposition to desert the tea-table]

James [to ANN, as he passes her]. You get on with the tea, mother. [To VALLANCE] Allow me, Mr. Vallance . . .

[VALLANCE gives him the duplicate of the statement]

Ponting. What's it come out at? What's it come out at?

Stephen. What's it come out at?

Rose. Yes, what does it come out at? Jim . . .

Stephen. Jim . . .

[JAMES joins STEPHEN, and they examine the duplicate together. ROSE rises and endeavors to read it with them]

Elkin. I estimate the gross value of the estate, which, as you will see, consists entirely of personal property, at one hundred and ninety-two thousand pounds.

Ponting. The gross value.

Stephen. Yes, but what do we get?

Ponting and Rose. What do we get?

James. After all deductions.

Elkin. Roughly speaking, after payment of debts, death duties, and expenses, there will be about a hundred and seventy thousand pounds to divide.

[Those who are standing sit again.

JAMES seats himself next to STEPHEN and, with pen and ink, they make calculations on paper. PONTING does the same. ROSE, closing her eyes, fans herself happily, and the two ladies at the tea-table resume their preparations with beaming countenances. ELKIN leans back in his chair]

Mr. Vallance . . .

Vallance [to ROSE, JAMES, and STEPHEN].

Mrs. Ponting and gentlemen—

[PONTING raps the table and JAMES and STEPHEN look up]

I advise you that, as next-of-kin of the late Mr. Mortimore, if you are satisfied—and in my opinion you may reasonably be satisfied—that he died intestate—I advise you that any one or more of you, not exceeding three,

[The door opens quietly and THADDEUS appears. He is very pale, but is outwardly calm. After a look in the direction of the table, he closes the door] may apply for Letters of Administration of your late brother's estate. It isn't necessary or usual, however, I may tell you, to have more than one administrator, and I suggest—

[Hearing the click of the lock as THADDEUS shuts the door, everybody turns and glances at him]

Rose [opening her eyes]. Here's Tad.

Stephen [grumpily]. Oh . . .

Rose [tossing THADDEUS a greeting]. Hallo!

James [to THADDEUS, with a growl]. Oh, you've arrived.

Stephen [to THADDEUS]. Did I say four or half-past—?

Louisa. Where's Phyllis?

Ann. Where's Phyllis?

Thaddeus [in a low voice, advancing]. She—she didn't feel well enough—

[PONTING raps the inkstand with his penholder]

James [pointing to the chair beside him, imperatively]. Sit down; sit down.

[THADDEUS sits, his elbows on the table, his eyes cast down]

Mr. Vallance . . .

Vallance [to THADDEUS]. Good-afternoon, Mr. Mortimore.

Elkin [nodding to THADDEUS]. How d'ye do?

Thaddeus [almost inaudibly]. Good-afternoon.

Vallance [to the others]. I suppose we needn't go back . . . ?

A Murmur. No, no; no, no.

James [pushing the duplicate of the statement under THADDEUS's eyes]. A hundred and seventy thousand pounds to divide.

Stephen. A hundred and seventy thousand.

Ponting [finishing his sum]. Forty-two thousand five hundred apiece.

Vallance [resuming]. I was saying that it isn't usual to have more than one administrator, and I was about to suggest that the best course will be for you, Mr. James, to act in that capacity, and for you, Mr. Stephen, and you, Mr. Thaddeus, or one of you, and Colonel Ponting, to be the sureties to the bond for the due administration of the estate.

James [cheerfully]. I'm in your hands, Mr. Vallance.

Stephen. I'm agreeable.

Ponting. And I.

Vallance. The procedure is this—perhaps I'd better explain it. [Producing a form of "Oath for Administrators" which is among his papers] The intended administrator will make an affidavit stating when and where the deceased died, that he died intestate,

[THADDEUS looks up]

a bachelor without a parent, and that the deponent is a natural and lawful brother and one of the next-of-kin of the deceased—

Thaddeus [touching VALLANCE's arm].

Mr. Vallance . . .

Vallance. Eh?

Thaddeus. We—we mustn't go on with this.

Vallance. I beg pardon?

Thaddeus. The family mustn't go on with this.

Vallance. Mustn't go on—?

James [to THADDEUS]. What a'yer talking about?

Thaddeus [after a hurried look round]. There—there was a will.

Vallance. A will?

Thaddeus. He—he made a will.

James. Who did?

Thaddeus. Edward. He—he left a will. James [roughly]. What the—!

Elkin [to JAMES, interrupting him]. One moment. Your brother has something to say to us, Mr. Mortimore.

Stephen. What—what's he mean by—?

Elkin [to STEPHEN]. Please! [To THADDEUS] Yes, sir?

[THADDEUS is silent]

What about a will?

[THADDEUS is still silent]

Eh?

Thaddeus. I—I saw it.

Elkin. Saw a will?

Thaddeus. I—I opened it—I—I read it—

Elkin. Read it?

Thaddeus. I—tore it up—got rid of it.

[Again there is silence, the MORTIMORES and the PONTINGS sitting open-mouthed and motionless]

Elkin [after a while]. Mr. Vallance, I think we ought to tell Mr. Mortimore that he appears to be making a confession of the gravest kind—

Vallance. Yes.

Elkin. One that puts him in a very serious position.

Vallance [to THADDEUS, after a further pause]. Mr. Mortimore . . . ?

[THADDEUS makes no response]

Elkin. If, understanding that, he chooses to continue, there is nothing to prevent our hearing him.

Thaddeus [looking straight before him, his arms still upon the table, locking and unlocking his hands as he speaks]. It—it happened on the Wednesday night—in Cannon Row—in Ned's house—the night before he died—the night we were left without a nurse.

[Another pause. VALLANCE takes a sheet of paper and selects a pen. ELKIN pushes the inkstand nearer to him] Mrs. James—and—and Mrs. Stephen—my—my sisters-in-law—

[ANN and LOUISA get to their feet and advance a step or two]

Elkin [hearing the rustle of their skirts and turning to them]. Keep your seats, ladies, please.

[They sit again, drawing their chairs close together]

Thaddeus. My sisters-in-law had gone home—that is, to their hotel—to get a few

hours' sleep in case of their having to sit up through the night. Jim and Stephen and I were out and about, trying to find a night-nurse who'd take Nurse Ralston's place temporarily. At about nine o'clock, I looked in at Cannon Row, to see how things were getting on.

Vallance [writing]. The Wednesday? Mr. Edward Mortimore dying on Thursday, the twentieth of June—

Elkin. On the morning of Thursday, the twentieth.

Vallance. That makes the Wednesday we are speaking of, Wednesday, June the nineteenth.

Elkin [to THADDEUS]. You looked in at Cannon Row—?

Vallance. At about nine o'clock on the night of Wednesday, June the nineteenth.

Thaddeus. I—I went upstairs and sat by Ned's bed, and by and by he began talking to me about—about Phyllis. He—he'd taken rather a fancy to her, he said, and he wanted to give her a memento—a keepsake.

Elkin. Phyllis . . . ?

Vallance [to ELKIN]. His wife. [To THADDEUS] Your wife? [THADDEUS nods]

Elkin [recollecting]. Of course.

Thaddeus [moistening his lips with his tongue]. He—he had some little bits of jewelry in his safe, and he—he asked me to go downstairs and—and to bring them up to him.

Elkin [keenly]. In his safe?

Vallance. The safe in the library?

[THADDEUS nods again]

Elkin. Quite so.

Vallance. And—er—

Thaddeus. He—he gave me his keys, and I—I went down—I . . .

[*He stops suddenly, and VALLANCE glances at him. Noticing his extreme pallor, VALLANCE looks round the room. Seeing the water-bottle upon the sideboard, VALLANCE rises and fills the tumbler. Returning to the table, he places the glass before THADDEUS and resumes his seat*]

Thaddeus [after a gulp of water]. It was—it was in the drawer of the safe—the drawer . . .

Elkin. What was?

Thaddeus [wiping his mouth with his handkerchief]. A large envelope—a large envelope—the envelope containing the will.

Vallance. How did you know?

Thaddeus. "My Will" was written on it. *Vallance* [writing]. "My Will" . . .

Elkin. On the envelope?

[THADDEUS nods]

You say you opened it?

[THADDEUS nods]

Vallance. Opened the envelope . . .

Elkin. And inside—you found . . . ?

Vallance. What did you find?

Thaddeus. Ned's will.

Vallance [writing]. What appeared to be your brother Edward's will.

Elkin. You read it? [THADDEUS nods]

You recollect who was interested under it?

[THADDEUS nods]

Will you tell us?

[*The MORTIMORES and the PONTINGS crane their necks forward, listening breathlessly*]

Thaddeus. He left everything—[taking another gulp of water] everything—to Miss Thornhill.

[*There is a slight, undecided movement on the part of the MORTIMORES and the PONTINGS*]

Elkin [calmly but firmly]. Keep your seats; keep your seats, please. [To THADDEUS] Can you recall the general form of the will?

Thaddeus [straining his memory]. Everything he had—died possessed of—to Helen Thornhill—spinster—of some address in Paris—absolutely. And—and he appointed her his sole executrix.

Elkin. Do you recollect the date?

Thaddeus. Date . . . ?

Elkin. Did you observe the date of the will?

Thaddeus [quickly]. Oh, yes; it was made three years ago.

Elkin [to VALLANCE]. When she came of age.

Thaddeus. Oh, and he asked her to remember his servants—old servants at the brewery and in Cannon Row. [Leaning back, exhausted] There was nothing else. It was very short—written by Ned . . .

Elkin. The whole of it?

[THADDEUS nods, with half-closed eyes] The whole of it was in his handwriting?

[THADDEUS nods again]

Ah! [To VALLANCE, with a note of triumph in his voice] A holograph will, Mr. Vallance, prepared by the man himself.

Vallance [now taking up the questioning of THADDEUS]. Tell me, Mr. Mortimore—

have you any exact recollection as to whether this document, which you describe as a will, was duly signed and witnessed?

Thaddeus [rousing himself]. It was—it was—signed by Ned.

Vallance. Was it signed, not only by your brother, but by two witnesses under an attestation clause stating that the testator signed in the joint presence of those witnesses and that each of them signed in his presence?

Thaddeus. I—I don't recollect that.

Vallance [writing]. You've no recollection of that.

[JAMES, STEPHEN, and PONTING stir themselves]

James [hoarsely]. He doesn't recollect that, Mr. Vallance.

Stephen [in quavering tones]. No, he—he doesn't recollect that.

Ponting [pulling at his moustache with trembling fingers]. That's most important, Mr. Vallance, isn't it—isn't it?

Vallance [to THADDEUS, not heeding the interruption]. You say you destroyed this document—

Elkin. Tore it up.

Vallance. When—and where? In the room—in the library?

Thaddeus [thinking]. N-no—out of doors.

Vallance. Out of doors. When?

Thaddeus [at a loss]. When . . . ?

Vallance. When? [*Looking at him in surprise*] You can't remember?

Thaddeus [recollecting]. Oh, yes, yes, yes, yes. Some time between ten and eleven on the Thursday morning, after I left Phyllis—after I left my wife at Roper's to be measured for her black.

Vallance [writing]. What did you do then?

Thaddeus [readily]. I went to Ford Street bridge, and tore up the paper, and dropped the pieces into the Linch.

Vallance [writing]. Into the river . . .

Elkin. One more question, Mr. Mortimore—to make your motive perfectly clear to us. May we assume that, on the night of June the nineteenth, you were sufficiently acquainted with the law of intestacy to know that, if this dying man left no will, you would be likely to benefit considerably?

Thaddeus. Well, I—I had—the idea . . .

Elkin. The idea?

Thaddeus. I—I— [*recollecting*] Oh, yes;

there'd been a discussion in the train, you see, on the Tuesday, going to Linchpool—

Elkin. Discussion?

Thaddeus. Among us all, as to how a man's money is disposed of, if he dies intestate.

Elkin [nodding]. Precisely. [*To JAMES and STEPHEN*] You remember that conversation taking place, gentlemen?

James. Oh, I—I dessay.

Elkin [to THADDEUS]. So that, when you came upon the envelope with the endorsement upon it—"My Will" . . . ?

Thaddeus [leaning his head upon his hands]. Yes—yes . . .

Vallance [running his eyes over his notes, to THADDEUS]. Have you anything to add, Mr. Mortimore?

Thaddeus [in a muffled voice]. No. [*Quickly*] Oh, there is one thing I should like to add. [*Brokenly*] With regard to Miss Thornhill—I—I hope you'll bear in mind that I—that none of us—heard from Mr. Elkin of the existence of a child—a daughter—till the Thursday—middle-day . . .

Elkin. That is so.

Thaddeus. It doesn't make it much better; only—a girl—alone in the world—one wouldn't—[*breaking off*] no, I've nothing more to say.

Elkin [to THADDEUS]. And we may take it that your present act, Mr. Mortimore, is an act of conscience, purely?

[*THADDEUS inclines his head. There is silence again, the MORTIMORES and the PONTINGS presenting a picture of utter wretchedness. The ladies' tears begin to flow*]

James [after a time, speaking with some difficulty]. Well—

Stephen [piteously]. Mr. Vallance . . . ?

James. What—what's to be done, Mr. Vallance?

Ponting [to the ladies]. For God's sake, be quiet!

James [with a clenched fist on the table]. What we want to know is—what we want to know is—who does my brother Edward's money belong to now—her or us?

Stephen [in agony]. Her!

Ponting. Don't be a damn fool, Mortimore!

Vallance. Well, gentlemen, I confess I am hardly prepared to express an opinion off-hand on the legal aspect of the case—

Ponting. The will's torn up—it's destroyed—!

Stephen. It's destroyed—gone—gone!

Ponting. Gone.

Vallance. But I need not remind you, there is another aspect—

Ponting. I don't care a rap for any other aspect—

Stephen. We want the law explained to us—the law—

Ponting. The law—!

James [to ELKIN]. Mr. Elkin . . . ?

Elkin. You appeal to me, gentlemen?

Stephen and Ponting. Yes—yes . . .

Elkin. Then I feel bound to tell you that I shall advise Miss Thornhill, as the executrix named in the will, to apply to the Court for probate of its substance and effect—

Vallance [to ELKIN]. Ask the Court to presume the will to have been made in due form?

Elkin. Decidedly.

[STEPHEN and PONTING fall back in their seats in a stupor, and once more there is silence, broken only by the sound of the women sniveling. ELKIN and VALLANCE slowly proceed to collect their papers]

James [turning upon THADDEUS, brutally]. Have you—have you told Phyllis—have you told your wife what you've been up to?

[At the mention of PHYLLIS, there is a movement of indignation on the part of the ladies]

Rose. Ha!

James [to THADDEUS]. Have yer?

Thaddeus. Y-yes—just before I came out. [Weakly] That—that's what made me so late.

James [between his teeth]. What does she think of yer?

Thaddeus. Oh, she—she's dreadfully—cut up—of course.

Rose [hysterically]. The jewelry! Ha, ha, ha! [Rising] She's managed to get hold of some of the jewelry, at any rate.

Ann [with a sob]. Yes, she—she managed that.

Louisa [mopping her face]. She's kept that from us artfully enough.

[ROSE goes over to ANN and LOUISA, who rise to receive her]

Rose. Ha, ha! Edward's "little bits" of jewelry!

Ann. Little bits!

Rose. They're little bits that are left.

Louisa. How many did she have of them, I wonder!

Rose. She shall be made to restore them—

Louisa. Every one of them.

Thaddeus. No, no, no— [Stretching out a hand towards the ladies] Rosie—Ann—Lou—Phyllis hadn't any of the jewelry—not a scrap. I put it all back into the safe. I—I swear she hadn't any of it.

Elkin. Why did you do that?

Thaddeus [agitatedly]. Wly, you see, Mr. Elkin, when I carried it up-stairs, I found my brother Edward in a state of collapse—a sort of faint—

Elkin [with a nod]. Ah—

Thaddeus. And Phyllis—my wife—she sent me off at once for the doctor. It was on the Wednesday evening, you know—

Vallance [picking up his ears]. Your wife, Mr. Mortimore—?

Thaddeus. It was on the Wednesday evening that the change set in.

Vallance [to THADDEUS]. Your wife sent you off at once . . . ?

Thaddeus [to VALLANCE]. To fetch the doctor.

Vallance [raising his eyebrows]. Oh, Mrs. Mortimore was in the house while all this was going on?

Thaddeus. Y-yes; she was left in charge of him—in charge of Ned—

Elkin [to VALLANCE, in explanation]. To allow these other ladies to rest, preparatory to their taking charge later.

Thaddeus. Yes.

Vallance. I hadn't gathered—

[JAMES has been sitting glaring into space, thoughtfully]

James. Hold hard. [To THADDEUS] You didn't go for the doctor.

Thaddeus. Yes, I—I went—

Stephen [awakening from his trance]. Phyllis sent the cook for the doctor.

Thaddeus. Yes, yes; you're quite right. The cook was the first to go . . .

Elkin [to THADDEUS]. You followed?

Thaddeus. I followed.

James [knitting his brows]. It must have been a good time afterwards.

Thaddeus. Y-yes, perhaps it was.

James. I was at Dr. Oswald's when the woman arrived. The doctor was out, and—

Vallance [to THADDEUS]. You said your wife sent you at once.

Thaddeus. Told me to go at once. There

—there was the jewelry to put back into the safe . . .

Vallance [eyeing THADDEUS]. What time was it when you got to the doctor's?

Thaddeus. Oh—ten, I should say—or a quarter-past.

James [shaking his head]. No. I sat there, waiting for Dr. Oswald to come in—

Stephen [to THADDEUS]. Besides, that couldn't have been; you were with me then.

James [to STEPHEN]. Was he?

Stephen. Why, yes; he and I were at the Nurses' Home in Wharton Street from half-past nine till ten.

James. Half-past nine—?

Stephen [becoming more confident as he proceeds]. And we never left each other till we went back to Cannon Row.

Vallance. Let us understand this—

Ponting [having gradually revived, eagerly]. Yes—yes—[to the ladies] Sssh!

Stephen. And, what's more, we allowed ourselves a quarter of an hour to walk to Wharton Street.

James [quietly, looking round]. Hallo . . . !

Thaddeus. It—it's evident that I—that I'm mistaken in thinking that I—that I went to Dr. Oswald's—

Vallance. Mistaken?

Thaddeus. I—I suppose that, as the woman had already gone, I—I considered it—wasn't necessary . . . [To ELKIN and VALLANCE, passing his hand before his eyes] You must excuse my stupidity, gentlemen.

Vallance [to THADDEUS, distrustfully]. Then, according to your brother Stephen, Mr. Mortimore, you were in Cannon Row, on the occasion of this particular visit, no longer than from nine o'clock till a quarter past?

Stephen. Not so long, because we met, by arrangement, at a quarter-past nine, in the hall of the Grand Hotel—

James. The hotel's six or seven minutes' walk from Cannon Row—

Ponting. Quite, quite.

Thaddeus [a little wildly]. I said I called in at Cannon Row at about nine o'clock. It may have been half-past eight; it may have been eight—

James. Ann and Lou didn't leave Cannon Row till past eight—

Louisa [standing, with ANN and ROSE, by the tea-table]. It had gone eight—

James. I walked 'em round to the Grand—

Stephen. The three of us walked with them to the Grand—I

Louisa. All three—

James. So we did.

Stephen [excitedly]. And then Thaddeus went off to the Clarence Hospital with a note from Dr. Oswald—

James. By George, yes!

Stephen. I left him opposite the Exchange—it must have been nearly half-past eight then!

[JAMES rises. The ladies draw nearer to the dining-table]

Thaddeus. Ah, but I didn't go to the hospital—I didn't go to the hospital—

Stephen [rising]. Yes, you did. You brought a note back from the hospital, for us to take to Wharton Street—

Vallance [to ELKIN]. How far is the Clarence Hospital from the Exchange?

Elkin. A ten minutes' drive. It's on the other side of the water.

Thaddeus. I—I—I'd forgotten the hospital—

James [scowling at THADDEUS]. Forgotten—?

Thaddeus. I—I—I mean I—I thought the hospital came later—after I'd been at Wharton Street . . .

James [going to VALLANCE and tapping him on the shoulder]. Mr. Vallance—

Thaddeus. I—I must have gone to Cannon Row between my return from the hospital and my meeting Stephen at the Grand—

James [to ELKIN and VALLANCE]. Why, he couldn't have done it, gentlemen—

Ponting. Impossible!

Stephen. It's obvious; he couldn't have done it.

Thaddeus. I—I was only a few minutes at the hospital—

Elkin [scribbling on the back of a document]. Oh, yes, he could have done it—barely—

Vallance [making a mental calculation]. Assuming that he left his brother at the Exchange at eight-twenty—

Elkin. Ten minutes to the hospital.

Vallance. If he drove there—

Thaddeus. I did drive—I did drive—

Ponting [also figuring it out on paper]. Ten minutes back—

Elkin. Ten minutes at the hospital—

Ponting. Eight-fifty—

Thaddeus. Eight-fifty in Cannon Row! That was it—that was it, Mr. Elkin—

James. Give him twenty minutes in Cannon Row—give it him! He couldn't have done all he says he did in the time, gentlemen—

Stephen. He couldn't have done it—

Ponting. Impossible!

Elkin [to PONTING]. No, no, please—not impossible.

Vallance [to STEPHEN]. When you met Mr. Thaddeus Mortimore—you—when you met him in the hall of the Grand Hotel, before starting for Wharton Street, did he say anything to you as to his having just called at the house?

Stephen. No.

Vallance. Nothing as to an alarming change in your brother's condition?

Stephen. Not a syllable.

James [to ELKIN and VALLANCE]. Oh, there's a screw loose here, gentlemen, surely?

Stephen [joining JAMES]. That is most extraordinary, Mr. Vallance—isn't it? Not a syllable!

[ANN and LOUISA join their husbands, and the four gather round ELKIN and VALLANCE. ROSE stands behind PONTING'S chair]

Thaddeus. You see—Edward—Edward had rallied before I left Cannon Row. He—he'd fallen into a nice, quiet sleep—

James. All in twenty minutes, gentlemen—twenty minutes at the outside!

Vallance [to THADDEUS]. Mr. Mortimore—

Ann. I remember—

Ponting [to ANN]. Hold your tongue!

Vallance. Mr. Mortimore, who let you into the house in Cannon Row on the night of June the nineteenth—?

Ponting. Ah, yes—

Vallance. At any time between the hours of eight o'clock—?

Stephen. And eleven.

Elkin [to THADDEUS]. Who gave you admittance—which of the servants?

Thaddeus. I—I can't—I don't—[Blankly, addressing VALLANCE] was it the—the butler . . . ?

Vallance. No, no; I ask you. [To ELKIN] Have you the servants' addresses?

[ELKIN nods in reply]

Thaddeus. But you wouldn't—you

wouldn't trust to the servants' memories as to—as to which of them opened the front door to me a month ago! [With an attempt at a laugh] It's ridiculous!

Elkin [reprovingly]. Ah, now, now, Mr. Mortimore!

Thaddeus [starting up from the table]. Oh, it isn't fair—it isn't fair of you to badger me like this; it isn't fair!

Vallance. Nobody desires to "badger" you—

Thaddeus. Trip me up, then—confuse me. [At the left-hand end of the table, clutching the back of a chair] The will—the will's the main point—Ned's will. What does it matter—what can it matter, to a quarter of an hour or so—when I was in Cannon Row, or how long I was there? One would think, by the way I'm being treated, gentlemen, that I'd something to gain by this, instead of everything to lose—everything to lose!

James [coming forward, on the further side of the table]. Don't you whine about what you've got to lose—!

Stephen [joining him]. What about us!

The Ladies. Us!

Ponting [hitting the table]. Yes, confound you!

Vallance. Colonel Ponting!

Elkin [to JAMES and STEPHEN]. It seems to me—if my friend Mr. Vallance will allow me to say so—that you are really bearing a little hardly on your brother Thaddeus.

Thaddeus [gratefully]. Thank you, Mr. Elkin.

Elkin. What reason—what possible reason can there be for doubting his good faith?

Thaddeus. Thank you.

Elkin. Here is a man who forfeits a considerable sum of money, and deliberately places himself in peril, in order to right a wrong which nobody on earth would have suspected him of committing. Mr. Mortimore is accusing himself of a serious offense, not defending himself from it.

Vallance [obstinately]. What we beg of Mr. Mortimore to do, for the sake of all parties, is to clear up certain inconsistencies in his story with his brothers' account of his movements and conduct on this Wednesday evening. We are entitled to ask that.

James. Aye—entitled.

Stephen and Ponting. Entitled.

Elkin [to JAMES and STEPHEN]. Yes, and

Mr. Mortimore is equally entitled to refuse it.

James, Stephen, and Ponting [indignantly]. Oh—!

Thaddeus. But I—I haven't refused. I—I've done my best—

Elkin. On the other hand, if he has no objection to her doing so, the person to assist you, I suggest—distressing as it may be to her—is the wife.

Vallance [assentingly]. The wife . . .

[*THADDEUS pushes aside the chair which he is holding and comes to the table*]

Elkin. She ought to be able to satisfy you as to what time he was with her—

Vallance [to everybody]. By-the-bye, has she ever mentioned this visit of her husband's to Cannon Row—?

Ann and Louisa. Never—never—

Elkin. Attaching no importance to it. But now—

Thaddeus [stretching out a quivering hand to them all]. No. No, no. Don't you—don't you drag my wife into this. I—I won't have my wife dragged into this—

James [in a blaze]. Why not?

Stephen. Why not?

The Ladies [indignantly]. Ah—!

Thaddeus. You—you leave my wife out of it—

James [to THADDEUS, furiously]. Who the hell's your wife—!

Elkin and Vallance. Gentlemen—gentlemen—

Louisa. Who's Phyllis—!

Ann. Who's she—!

Rose. Ha!

James and Stephen [derisively]. Ha, ha, ha!

Thaddeus. Anyhow, I do object—I do object to your dragging her into it—[his show of courage flickering away] I—I do object—[Coming to the nearer side of the table, rather unsteadily] Mr. Elkin—Mr. Vallance—I—I don't think I can be of any further assistance to you to-day . . .

[*VALLANCE shrugs his shoulders at ELKIN*]

Elkin [to THADDEUS, kindly]. One minute—one minute more. Mr. Vallance has taken down your statement roughly. [To VALLANCE] If you'll read us your notes, Mr. Vallance, Mr. Mortimore will tell us whether they are substantially correct—

[*To THADDEUS*] perhaps he will even be willing to attach his name to them . . .

[*With a nod of patient acquiescence, THADDEUS sinks into the middle chair.*

VALLANCE prepares to read his notes, first making some additions to them]

James [to THADDEUS, from the other side of the table]. Look here—!

Thaddeus [feebly]. No—no more questions. I—I'm advised I—I may refuse—

James. Mr. Vallance asked you just now about your conscience—

Thaddeus. I—I'm not going to answer any more questions—

Stephen [to JAMES]. It was Mr. Elkin—

James. I don't care a curse which it was—

Thaddeus. No more questions—

James [leaning across the table towards THADDEUS, fiercely]. When the devil did your conscience begin to prick you over this? Hey?

Stephen [to THADDEUS]. Yes, you've been in excellent spirits apparently this last month—excellent spirits.

James [hammering on the table]. Hey?

Stephen [to ELKIN and VALLANCE]. There was no sign of anything amiss when we were with him this afternoon, gentlemen—none whatever, I give you my word.

James. Less than two hours ago—not a symptom!

Stephen [to JAMES]. He was gay enough at the club dinner on Tuesday night. It was remarked—commented on.

Louisa [at STEPHEN'S elbow, unconsciously]. It's Phyllis who's been ill all the month, not Thaddeus.

James [in the same way, with a hoarse laugh]. Ha! If it had been his precious wife who'd come to us and told us this tale—

Stephen. Yes, if it had been the lady—

James. If it had been—

[*Struck by the idea which occurs to him, JAMES breaks off. THADDEUS doesn't stir. JAMES, after a pause, continues thoughtfully*]

If it had been . . .

Stephen [holding his breath, to JAMES]. Eh?

James [slowly stroking his beard]. One might have—understood it . . .

[*ELKIN has been listening attentively*]

Elkin [in a tone of polite interest]. How long has Mrs. Mortimore been indisposed?

James [*disturbed*]. Oh—er—a few weeks—Vallance [*quietly*]. Ever since . . . ?

James [*with a nod*]. Aye.

[*ELKIN and VALLANCE look at each other inquiringly*]

Stephen [*staring into space*]. Ever since—Edward—as a matter of fact—

Rose [*going to ANN and LOUISA*]. What's wrong with her? What's wrong with his wife?

Ann [*obtusely*]. She's not sleeping.

Louisa [*looking from one to the other*]. No—she isn't . . .

[*There is a further pause, and then THADDEUS, slowly turning from the table, rises*]

Thaddeus [*in a strange voice, his hands fumbling at the buttons of his jacket*]. Well, gentlemen—whatever my sins are—I—I decline to sit still and hear my wife insulted in this style. If it's all the same to you, I'll call round on Mr. Vallance in the morning and—and sign the paper . . .

[*While THADDEUS is speaking, JAMES and STEPHEN come forward on the left, ELKIN and VALLANCE on the right. The three women get together at the back and look on with wide-open eyes. The movement is made gradually and noiselessly, so that when THADDEUS turns to go he is startled at finding his way obstructed. After a time PONTING also leaves the table, watching the proceedings, with a falling jaw, from a little distance on the right*]

Elkin [*rubbing his chin meditatively, to THADDEUS*]. Mr. Mortimore, your wife traveled with you and the other members of the family to Linchpool on the Tuesday—?

James. Aye, she was with us—

Elkin [*to THADDEUS*]. She was in the railway carriage when the—when the discussion arose—?

Stephen. Yes, yes—

Elkin. The discussion as to where a man's money goes, in the absence of a will?

Ann [*from the other side of the table*]. Yes—

Louisa [*close to ANN*]. Of course she was.

Elkin [*nodding*]. H'm [*To THADDEUS*] I—I am most anxious not to pain you unnecessarily. Er—the conversation you had

with your brother Edward at the bedside, in reference to Mrs. Thaddeus Mortimore—when he said that he—that he—

James [*breathing heavily*]. He'd taken a fancy to her—

Elkin. That he wished to make her a present of jewelry—she was within hearing during that talk?

Thaddeus [*avoiding everybody's gaze, his hands twitching involuntarily at his side*]. She—she may have been.

Elkin [*piercingly*]. He was left in her charge, you know.

Thaddeus. She—she was moving about the room—

Elkin. She would scarcely have been far away from him.

Thaddeus [*moistening his lips with his tongue*]. N-no.

Elkin. And when he handed you his keys and asked you to go down-stairs and open the safe—did she hear and witness that also?

Thaddeus. She—she—very likely.

Elkin [*raising his voice*]. There was nothing at all confidential in this transaction between you and your brother?

Thaddeus. Why—why should there have been?

Elkin. Why should there have been? [*Coming a step nearer to him*] So that, feeling towards her as he did, there was no reason why, if you hadn't chanced to be on the spot—there was no reason why he shouldn't have held that conversation with her, and intrusted her with the keys.

Thaddeus. She—she was almost a stranger to him. He—he hadn't seen her since she was a child—

Elkin [*interrupting him*]. Tell us—this illness of Mrs. Mortimore's . . . ?

Thaddeus. My—my wife's a nervous, delicate woman—always has been . . .

Elkin [*nodding*]. Quite so.

Thaddeus. She—she was upset at being alone with Edward when he—when he swooned—

James. That was the tale—

Elkin [*to THADDEUS*]. Although you happened to be in the library, a floor or two below, at the time.

Thaddeus. He—he might have died suddenly, in her arms. She's a nervous, sensitive woman—

Elkin [*nodding*]. And she's been unwell ever since. [*With an abrupt change of man-*

ner] Mr. Mortimore, how is the lock of the safe opened?

Thaddeus. Opened—?

Elkin [sharply]. The safe in the library in Cannon Row—how do you open it?

[THADDEUS is silent]

Is it a simple lock, or is there anything unusual about it?

Thaddeus. He—he gave me directions how to open it.

Elkin. Tell us.

Thaddeus. I—I forget . . .

Elkin. Forget?

Thaddeus. It—it's gone from me . . .

James [in a low voice]. Gentlemen, you couldn't forget that—

Stephen [in the same way]. You couldn't forget it.

Elkin [to THADDEUS, solemnly]. Mr. Mortimore, are you sure that the conversation at the bedside didn't take place between your brother and your wife solely, and that it wasn't she who was sent down-stairs to fetch the jewelry?

Thaddeus [drawing himself up, with a last effort]. Sure . . . !

Elkin. Are you positive that she didn't open the safe?

Thaddeus. It—it's ridiculous . . .

Elkin [quickly]. When you took her to Roper's, the draper's, on the Thursday—you left her there?

Thaddeus. Yes, I—I left her . . .

Elkin. Are you sure that she didn't then go on to the bridge, and tear up the will, and throw the pieces into the river?

Thaddeus. I—I decline to answer any more questions—

Elkin [raising his voice again]. Were you in Cannon Row, sir, on the night of June the nineteenth, for a single moment between eight o'clock and eleven—?

Thaddeus [losing his head completely]. Ah! Ah! I know—I know! You mean to drag my wife into this!

Elkin [to THADDEUS]. You were late in coming here this afternoon, Mr. Mortimore—

Thaddeus [to ELKIN, threateningly]. Don't you—don't you dare to do it—!

Elkin. Owing, you say, to your having made a communication to Mrs. Mortimore about this affair—

Thaddeus [clinging to the chair which is behind him]. You—you leave my wife out of it—!

Elkin. Are you sure that you were not delayed through having to receive a communication from her—?

Thaddeus [dropping into the chair]. Don't you—drag her—into it—!

Elkin. Are you sure that the story you have told us, substituting yourself for the principal person of that story, is not exactly the story which she has just told you?

[There is a pause. PONTING goes to ROSE]

Mr. Vallance . . .

Vallance. Yes?

Elkin. I propose to see Mrs. Mortimore in this matter, without delay.

Vallance. Very good.

Elkin. Will you . . . ?

Vallance. Certainly.

[Quietly, VALLANCE returns to the table and, seating himself, again collects his papers. ELKIN is following him]

James. Mr. Elkin—

Elkin [stopping]. Eh?

James. Stealing a will—destroying a will—what is it?

Elkin. What is it?

James. The law—what's the law?

Elkin [to JAMES]. I—I'm sorry to have to say, sir—it's a felony.

Thaddeus [with a look of horror]. Oh . . . !

[ANN and LOUISA come to JAMES and STEPHEN hurriedly. ELKIN sits beside VALLANCE, and, picking up their bags from the floor, they put away their papers]

James [standing over THADDEUS]. Well! Are yer proud of her now?

Stephen. This is what his marriage has ended in!

Louisa. I'm not in the least surprised.

Ann. Old Burdock's daughter!

Rose [from the other side of the table]. Thank heaven, my name isn't Mortimore!

Thaddeus [leaping to his feet in a frenzy]. Don't you touch her! Don't any of you touch her! Don't you harm a hair of her head! [To the group on the left] You've helped to bring this on her! You've helped to make her life unendurable! You've helped to bring her to this! She's been a good wife to me. Oh, my God, let me get her away! [Turning towards the door] Mr. Elkin—Mr. Vallance—do let me get her away! Don't you harm a hair of her head!

Don't you touch her! [*At the door*] She's been a good wife to me! [*Opening the door and disappearing*] She's been a good wife to me . . . !

James [*moving over to the right, shouting after THADDEUS*]. Been a good wife to you, has she!

Stephen [*also moving to the right*]. A disgrace—a disgrace to the family!

Louisa [*following STEPHEN*]. I always said so—I said so till I was tired—

James. We've helped to bring her to this!

Ann [*sitting in a chair on the nearer side of the dining-table*]. A vile creature!

Ponting [*coming forward on the left with ROSE*]. Damn the woman! Damn the woman! My position is a cruel one—

Stephen [*raising his arms as he paces the room on the right*]. Here's a triumph for Hammond!

James [*to PONTING, contemptuously*]. Your position—!

Louisa. Nellie Robson's got the better of me now.

Ponting [*to JAMES*]. I'm landed with an enormous house in Carlos Place—my builders are in it—

Rose [*pacing the room on the left*]. Oh, we're in a shocking scrape! We're up to our necks—!

James [*approaching PONTING*]. D'y'e think you're the only sufferer—!

Stephen [*wildly*]. A triumph for Hammond! A triumph for Hammond!

James [*to PONTING*]. I've bought all that dirt at the bottom of Gordon Street—acres of it—!

Ponting [*passing him and walking away to the right*]. That's your business.

Stephen [*now, with LOUISA, at the further side of the dining-table*]. Hammond and his filthy rag!

James [*going after PONTING, in a fury*]. Aye, it is my business—

Ponting [*turning upon him viciously*]. I wish to God, sir, I'd never seen or heard of you, or your family.

Rose [*coming forward*]. Oh, Toby, don't—!

James [*to PONTING*]. You wish that, do yer—!

Ann [*rising and putting herself between JAMES and PONTING*]. James!

Stephen [*shaking his fists in the air*]. Blast Hammond and his filthy rag.

James [*to PONTING*]. You patronizing little pauper—!

Rose [*to JAMES*]. Don't you speak to my husband like that—!

Ponting. You're a pack of low, common people—!

Rose [*going to PONTING*]. He's the only gentleman among you.

James. The only gentleman among us—!

Stephen [*coming forward, with LOUISA, on the left*]. The only gentleman—!

[ANN is forcing JAMES, coaxingly, towards the left]

James. We could have done without such a gentleman in our family— [*To ANN*] hey, mother?

Stephen [*advancing to PONTING, still followed by LOUISA*]. Exceedingly well—exceedingly well—

Louisa [*taking STEPHEN'S arm*]. Don't lower yourself—!

James [*over ANN'S shoulder*]. The Colonel never came near us the other day till he saw a chance o' picking up the pieces—!

Stephen. Nor Rose either—neither of them did!

James. It's six o' one and half a dozen o' the other!

Rose [*to JAMES and STEPHEN*]. Oh, you cads, you boys—!

James [*mockingly*]. Didn't they bustle down to Linchpool in a hurry then! Ha, ha, ha!

Stephen [*waving his hand in PONTING'S face*]. This serves you right, Colonel; this serves you right.

Rose [*leading PONTING towards the door*]. Don't notice them—don't notice them . . .

James [*walking about on the left, to ANN*]. I'm in a mess, mother; I'm in a dreadful mess!

Stephen [*sinking into a chair by the tea-table*]. On I go at the broken-down rat-hole in King Street; on I go with my worn-out old plant . . .

[*On getting to the door, PONTING discovers that ELKIN and VALLANCE have taken their departure. He returns, with ROSE, to the further side of the dining-table*]

Ann [*to JAMES*]. You must get rid of your contract, James.

James. Who'll take it—who'll take it—!

Stephen. I've always been behind the times—

Louisa. Nelly will laugh her teeth out of her head—

Ponting [to JAMES and STEPHEN, trying to attract their attention]. Mortimore—Mortimore—

Ann [to JAMES]. It's splendid land, isn't it?

James. Nobody's been ass enough to touch it but me!

Stephen [rocking himself to and fro]. Always behind the times—no need to tell me that—

Ponting [to JAMES]. Mortimore—

James [to PONTING]. What?

Ponting [pointing to the empty chairs]. They've gone . . .

James [sobering down]. Hooked it—

Stephen [looking round]. Gone—?

James. Elkin—

Stephen [weakly]. And Vallance—

James. They might have had the common civility—

Ponting [coming forward slowly and dejectedly]. They've gone to that woman—

Rose [at the further side of the table]. I hope they send her to jail—the trull—the baggage!

[ANN and LOUISA join ROSE]

Ponting. The whole business will be settled between 'em in ten minutes—the whole business . . .

James [coming to PONTING]. Aye, the whole concern.

Stephen [who has risen, holding his head]. Oh, it's awful!

Ponting [laying a hand on JAMES and STEPHEN who are on either side of him]. My friends, don't let us disagree—we're all in the same boat—

James [grimly, looking into space]. Aye, they'll be talking it over nicely—

Ponting. Let us stick to each other. Aren't we throwing up the sponge prematurely—?

James [not heeding him]. Tad and his wife and the lawyers—ha, ha—!

Stephen. And that girl—

James [nodding]. The young lady.

Ponting. What girl?

Stephen. Miss Thornhill.

Ponting. Thornhill—?

James. She's staying with 'em.

Ponting. She is!

Rose [coming forward on the left]. Stay-ing with the Tads—?

Ponting. In their house! Elkin and Vallance will find her there!

James [nodding]. Aye.

Ponting [violently]. It's a conspiracy—!

James. Conspiracy—?

Ponting. I see it! The Thornhill girl's in it!

[He goes to ROSE as ANN and LOUISA come forward on the left]

They're cheating us—they're cheating us! I tell you we ought to be present. They're robbing us behind our backs—

Stephen [looking at JAMES]. Jim—?

James [shaking his head]. No, it's no conspiracy—

Ponting. It is! They're robbing us—!

Stephen [to JAMES]. Still, I—I really think—

Ponting. Behind our backs!

The Ladies. Yes—yes—yes—

James [after a pause, quietly, stroking his beard]. By George, we'll go down—!

[Instantly they all make for the door]

Stephen. We'll be there as soon as Elkin—

Ponting. A foul conspiracy—!

Ann [in the rear]. Wait till I put on my hat—

Rose. Jim, you follow with Ann.

Ponting [to STEPHEN]. We'll go on ahead.

Stephen. Yes, we'll go first.

Louisa. I'm ready.

James. No, no; we'll all go together.

Ponting. Robbing us behind our backs—!

James. Look sharp, mother!

The Others. Be quick—be quick—be quick . . . !

[Scizing ANN and pushing her before them, they struggle through the doorway]

ACT FOUR

Again, the drawing-room in the house of the THADDEUS MORTIMORES. VALLANCE is seated at the writing-table by the bay-window, reading aloud from a written paper. PHYLLIS, in deep abasement, is upon the settee by the piano, and THADDEUS is standing by her, holding her left hand in both of his. On the left of the table at the end of the piano sits HELEN, pale, calm, and erect, and opposite to her, in the chair on the other side of the table, is ELKIN. PONTING is sitting in the bay-window. STEPHEN is

standing upon the hearth-rug, and the rest of the "family" are seated about the room—all looking very humble and downcast. ANN and LOUISA are upon the settee on the right, ROSE is in the armchair on the nearer side of the fireplace, JAMES on the ottoman. ROSE, ANN, and LOUISA are in their outdoor things.

Vallance [reading]. "It was broad daylight before my husband and I got back to our lodgings. The document was then in a pocket I was wearing under my dress. Before going to bed I hid the pocket in a drawer. At about eleven o'clock on the same morning my husband took me to Roper's, the draper's, in Ford Street, and left me there. After my measurements were taken, I went up Ford Street and on to the bridge. I then tore up both the paper and the envelope and dropped the pieces into the water."

Elkin [half turning to PHYLLIS]. You declare that that is correct in every particular, Mrs. Mortimore?

[PHYLLIS bursts into a paroxysm of tears]

Thaddeus [to PHYLLIS, as if comforting a child]. All right, dear; all right. I'm with you—I'm with you.

[She sobs helplessly] Tell Mr. Elkin—tell him—is that correct?

Phyllis [through her sobs]. Yes.

Elkin [to PHYLLIS]. You've nothing further to say?

[Her sobbing continues]

Thaddeus [to PHYLLIS]. Have you anything more to say, dear? [Encouragingly, as she tries to speak] I'm here, dear—I'm with you. Is there anything—anything more . . . ?

Phyllis. Only—only that I beg Miss Thornhill's pardon. I beg her pardon. Oh, I beg her pardon.

[ELKIN looks at HELEN, who, however, makes no response]

Thaddeus [to PHYLLIS, glancing at the others]. And—and . . .

Phyllis. And—and Ann and Jim—and Stephen—and Lou—and Rose and Colonel Ponting—I beg their pardon—I beg their pardon. [She sinks back upon the settee, and her fit of weeping gradually exhausts itself]

Thaddeus. And I—and I, Mr. Elkin—I wish to offer my apologies—my humble

apologies—to you and Mr. Vallance—and to everybody—for what took place this afternoon in my brother's dining-room.

Elkin [kindly]. Perhaps it isn't necessary—

Thaddeus. Perhaps not—but it's on my mind. [To ELKIN and VALLANCE] I assure you and Mr. Vallance—[to the others] and I assure every member of my family—that when I went away from here I had no intention of inventing the story I attempted to tell you at "Ivanhoe." It came into my head suddenly—quite suddenly—on my way to Claybrook Road—almost at the gate of the house. I must have been mad to think I could succeed in imposing on you all. I believe I was mad, gentlemen; and that's my excuse, and I—I hope you'll accept it.

Elkin. Speaking for myself, I accept it freely.

Vallance. And I.

Thaddeus. Thank you—thank you.

[He looks at the others wistfully, but they are all staring at the carpet, and they, too, make no response. Then he seats himself beside PHYLLIS and again takes her hand]

Elkin [after a pause]. Well, Mr. Vallance

[VALLANCE rises, the written paper in his hand, and comes forward on the left]

I think—[glancing over his shoulder at PHYLLIS] I think that this lady makes it perfectly clear to any reasonable person that the document which she abstracted from the safe in Cannon Row, and subsequently destroyed, was the late Mr. Edward Mortimore's will, and that Miss Thornhill was the universal legatee under it, and was named as the sole executrix.

[VALLANCE seats himself in the chair on the extreme left]

As I said in Mr. James Mortimore's house, the advice I shall give to Miss Thornhill is that she applies to the Court for probate of the substance and effect of this will.

Vallance. Upon an affidavit by Mrs. Thaddeus Mortimore—?*

Elkin. An affidavit disclosing what she has done and verifying a statement of the contents of the will.

Vallance. And how, may I ask, are you going to get over your great difficulty?

Elkin. My great difficulty . . . ?

Vallance. The fact that Mrs. Thaddeus Mortimore is unable to swear that the will was duly witnessed.

Ponting. Ah! [*Rising and coming forward, but discreetly keeping behind HELEN*] That seems to me to be insuperable—insuperable. [*Anxiously*] Eh, Mr. Vallance?

Stephen [*advancing a step or two*]. An obstacle which cannot be got over.

Ponting [*eyeing HELEN furtively*]. It—ah—may appear rather ungracious to Miss Thornhill—a young lady we hold in the highest esteem—and to whom I express regret for any hasty word I may have used on arriving here—unreserved regret—

[*HELEN's eyes flash, and her shoulders contract; otherwise she makes no acknowledgment*]

it may appear ungracious to Miss Thornhill to discuss this point in her presence; [*pulling at his moustache*] but she will be the first to recognize that there are many—ah—interests at stake.

Stephen. Many interests—many interests—

Ponting. And where so many interests are involved, one mustn't—ah—allow oneself to be swayed by anything like sentiment.

Stephen [*at the round table*]. In justice, one oughtn't to be sentimental.

Ponting. One daren't be sentimental.

Louisa [*meekly, raising her head*]. I always maintain—

Stephen [*to LOUISA*]. Yes, yes, yes.

Louisa. There are two sides—

Stephen. Yes, yes.

Elkin [*ignoring the interruption*]. Mrs. Thaddeus Mortimore is prepared to swear, Mr. Vallance, that she believes there were other signatures besides the signature of the late Mr. Mortimore.

Vallance. But she has no recollection of the names of witnesses—

Ponting. None whatever.

Stephen. Not the faintest.

Vallance. Nor as to whether there was an attestation clause at all.

Ponting. Her memory is an utter blank as to that.

Stephen. An utter blank.

[*As PONTING and STEPHEN perk up, there is a rise in the spirits of the ladies at the fireplace. ROSE twists her chair round to face the men. JAMES doesn't stir*]

Elkin. Notwithstanding that, I can't help considering it reasonably probable that, in the circumstances, the Court would presume the will to have been made in due form.

Ponting [*walking about agitatedly*]. I differ.

Stephen [*walking about*]. So do I.

Ponting. I don't pretend to a profound knowledge of the law—

Stephen. As a mere layman, I consider it extremely improbable—extremely improbable.

Vallance [*to STEPHEN and PONTING*]. Well, gentlemen, there I am inclined to agree with you—

Ponting [*pulling himself up*]. Ah!

Stephen [*returning to the round table*]. Ah!

Vallance. I think it doubtful whether, on the evidence of Mrs. Thaddeus Mortimore, the will could be upheld.

Ponting. Exactly. [*To everybody*] You've only to look at the thing in the light of common sense—

Stephen [*argumentatively, rapping the table*]. A will exists or it does not exist—

Ponting. If it ever existed, and has been destroyed—

Stephen. It must be shown that it was a complete will—

Ponting. Shown beyond dispute.

Stephen. Complete down to the smallest detail.

Vallance [*continuing*]. At the same time, in my opinion, the facts do not warrant the making of an affidavit that the late Mr. Mortimore died intestate.

Ponting [*stiffly*]. Indeed?

Stephen [*depressed*]. Really?

Vallance. And the question of whether or not he left a duly executed will is clearly one for the Court to decide.

Elkin. Quite so—quite so.

Vallance. I advise, therefore, that, to get the question determined, the next-of-kin should consent to the course of procedure suggested by Mr. Elkin.

Elkin. I am assuming their consent.

Ponting [*blustering*]. And supposing the next-of-kin do not consent, Mr. Vallance—?

Stephen. Supposing we do not consent—?

Ponting. Supposing we are convinced—convinced—that the late Mr. Mortimore

died without leaving a properly executed will?

Elkin. Then the application, instead of being by motion to the judge in Court, must take the form of an action by writ. [To VALLANCE] In any case, perhaps it should do so.

[*There is a pause. STEPHEN wanders disconsolately to the window on the right and stands gazing into the garden. PONTING leans his elbows on the piano and stares at vacancy*]

Elkin [to HELEN, looking at his watch]. Well, my dear Miss Thornhill . . . ?

[VALLANCE rises]

Helen. Wait—wait a moment . . .

[*The sound of HELEN's voice turns everybody, except JAMES, THADDEUS, and PHYLLIS, in her direction*]

Elkin [to HELEN]. Eh?

Helen. Wait a moment, please. There is something I want to be told—there's something I want to be told plainly.

Elkin. What?

Helen. Mrs. Thaddeus Mortimore . . .

Elkin. Yes?

Helen [slowly]. I want to know whether it is necessary, whatever proceedings are taken on my behalf—whether it is necessary that she should be publicly disgraced. I want to know that.

Elkin. Whichever course is adopted—motion to the judge or action by writ—Mrs. Thaddeus Mortimore's act must be disclosed in open Court.

Helen. There are no means of avoiding it?

Elkin. None.

Helen. And the offence she has committed is—felony, you say?

[*ELKIN inclines his head. Again there is silence, during which HELEN sits with knitted brows, and then JAMES rouses himself and looks up*]

James [to ELKIN]. What's the—what's the penalty?

Elkin [turning to him]. The—the penalty?

James. The legal punishment.

Elkin. I think—another occasion.

[*Suddenly THADDEUS and PHYLLIS rise together, he with an arm round her, supporting her, and they stand side by side like criminals in the dock*]

Thaddeus [quickly]. No, no—now . . .

Phyllis [faintly]. Yes—now . . .

Thaddeus [to ELKIN and VALLANCE]. We—we should like to know the worst, gentlemen. I—I had the idea from the first that it was a serious offence—but hardly so serious . . .

Elkin [with a wave of the hand]. By and by . . .

Thaddeus. Oh, you needn't hesitate, Mr. Elkin. [Drawing PHYLLIS closer to him] We—we shall go through with it. We shall go through with it to the end. [After a pause] Imprisonment, sir?

Elkin [gravely]. A person convicted of stealing or destroying a will for a fraudulent purpose is liable under the statute to varying terms of penal servitude, or to imprisonment with or without hard labor. In this instance, we should be justified, I am sure, in hoping for a considerable amount of leniency.

[*THADDEUS and PHYLLIS slowly look at one another with expressionless faces. JAMES rises and moves away to the fireplace, where he stands looking down upon the flowers in the grate. VALLANCE goes to the writing-table and puts the written paper into his bag. ELKIN rises, takes up his bag from the table at the end of the piano, and is following VALLANCE. As he passes HELEN, she lays her hand upon his arm*]

Helen. Mr. Elkin . . .

Elkin [stopping]. Yes?

Helen. Oh, but this is impossible.

Elkin. Impossible?

Helen. Quite impossible. I couldn't be a party—please understand me—I refuse to be a party—to any steps which would bring ruin on Mrs. Mortimore.

Elkin [politely]. You refuse . . . ?

Helen. Absolutely. At any cost—at any cost to me—we must all unite in sparing her and her husband and children.

Elkin. My dear young lady, I join you heartily in your desire not to bring suffering upon innocent people. But if you decline to take proceedings . . .

Helen. There is no "if" in the matter . . .

Elkin. If you decline to take proceedings, there is a deadlock.

Helen. A deadlock?

Elkin. As Mr. Vallance tells us, it's out of the question that the next-of-kin should now apply for Letters of Administration in the usual way.

Helen. Why? I don't see why—I can't see why.

Elkin [pointing to JAMES and STEPHEN]. You don't see why neither of these gentlemen can make an affidavit that Mr. Edward Mortimore died intestate!

Helen [with a movement of the head towards PHYLLIS]. She has no remembrance of a—what is it called . . . ?

Ponting [eagerly]. Attestation clause.

Stephen [coming to the head of the piano]. Attestation clause.

Helen [haughtily, without turning]. Thank you. [To ELKIN] Only the vaguest notion that there were witnesses.

Ponting. The vaguest notion.

Stephen. The haziest.

Elkin. Her memory is uncertain there. [To HELEN] But you know—you know, Miss Thornhill—as we all know—that it was your father's will that was found in the safe at Cannon Row and destroyed.

Helen [looking up at him, gripping the arms of her chair]. Yes, of course I know it. Thank God I know it! I'm happy in knowing it. I know he didn't forget me; I know I was all to him that I imagined myself to be. And it's because I've come to know this at last—through her—that I can afford to be a little generous to her. Oh, please don't think that I want to introduce sentimentality into this affair—[with a contemptuous glance at PONTING and STEPHEN] any more than Colonel Ponting does—or Mr. Stephen Mortimore. Mrs. Thaddeus did a cruel thing when she destroyed that will. It's no excuse for her to say that she wasn't aware of my existence. She was defrauding some woman; and, as it happened—I own it now!—defrauding that woman, not only of money, but of what is more valuable than money—of peace of mind, contentment, belief in one who could never speak, never explain, never defend himself. However, she has made the best reparation it is in her power to make—and she has gone through a bad time—and I forgive her.

[PHYLLIS releases herself from THADDEUS and drops down upon the settee.

He sits upon the ottoman, burying his face in his hands. HELEN rises, struggling to keep back her tears, and turns to the door]

I—I'll go up-stairs—if you'll allow me . . .

Elkin [between her and the door]. Miss

Thornhill, you put us in a position of great difficulty—

Helen [impatiently]. I say again, I don't see why. Where is the difficulty? [To VALLANCE and ELKIN] If there's a difficulty, it's you gentlemen who are raising it. Let the affair go on as it was going on. [Turning to JAMES] Mr. Mortimore! [To ELKIN] I say, let Mr. James Mortimore and the others administer the estate as they intended to do.

[JAMES has left the fireplace and slowly advanced to her. She addresses him] Mr. Mortimore—

Elkin [to HELEN]. Then you would have Mr. James Mortimore deliberately swear that he believes his late brother died without leaving a will?

Helen. Certainly, if necessary. Who would be hurt by it?

Elkin [pursing his lips]. Miss Thornhill—

Helen [hotly]. Why, which do you think would be the more acceptable to the Almighty—that I should send this poor lady to prison, or that Mr. James should take a false oath?

Elkin. H'm! I won't attempt to follow you quite so far. But even then a most important point would remain to be settled.

Helen. Even then . . .

Elkin. Assuming that Mr. James Mortimore did make this affidavit—that he were permitted to make such an affidavit . . .

Helen. Yes?

Elkin. What about the disposition of the estate?

Helen [nodding, slowly and thoughtfully]. The—the disposition of the estate . . .

[STEPHEN steals over to PONTING, and ROSE, ANN, and LOUISA quietly rise and gather together. They all listen with painful interest]

Elkin [to HELEN]. Morally, at all events, the whole of the late Mr. Mortimore's estate belongs to you.

Helen [simply]. It was his intention that it should do so. [Looking at JAMES, as if inviting him to speak] Well . . . ?

James [stroking his beard]. Look here, Miss Thornhill. [Pointing to the chair on the extreme left] Sit down a minute.

[She sits. JAMES also seats himself, facing her, at the right of the table at the end of the piano. VALLANCE joins ELKIN, and they stand near HELEN,

occasionally exchanging remarks with each other]

Look here. [*In a deep, gruff voice*] There is no doubt that my brother Ned's money rightfully belongs to you.

Ponting [*nervously*]. Mortimore . . .

James [*turning upon him*]. You leave us alone. Don't you interfere. [*To HELEN*] I've no more doubt about it, Miss Thornhill, than that I'm sitting here. Very good. Say I make the affidavit, and that we—the family—obtain Letters of Administration. What then? The money comes to us. Still it's *yours*. We get hold of it, but it's *yours*. Now! What if we offer to throw the whole lot, so to speak, into your lap?

Stephen [*biting his nails*]. Jim . . .

James [*to STEPHEN*]. Don't you interfere. [*To HELEN*] I repeat, what if we offer to throw the whole lot into your lap? [*Leaning forward, very earnestly*] Miss Thornhill—

Ponting. May I—?

James [*to PONTING*]. If you can't be silent . . . ! [*To HELEN*] Miss Thornhill, we're poor, we Mortimores. I won't say anything about Rose—[*with a sneer*] it wouldn't be polite to the Colonel; nor Tad—you see what he's come to. But Stephen and me—take our case. [*To ELKIN and VALLANCE*] Mr. Vallance—Mr. Elkin—this is sacred. [*To HELEN*] My dear, we're prominent men in the town, both of us; we're looked up to as being fairly warm and comfortable; but in reality we're not much better off than the others. My trade's being cut into on all sides; Stephen's business has run to seed; we've no capital; we've never had any capital. What we might have saved has been spent on educating our children, and keeping up appearances; and when the time comes for us to be knocked out, there'll be precious little—bar a stroke of luck—precious little for us to end our days on. So this is a terrible disappointment to us—an awful disappointment. Aye, the money's yours—it's yours—but—[*opening his hands*] what are you going to do for the family?

[*There is a pause. The PONTINGS, STEPHEN, ANN, and LOUISA draw a little nearer*]

Helen [*to JAMES*]. Well—since you put it in this way—I'll tell you what I'll do. [*After a pause*] I'll share with you all.

James [*to the others*]. You leave us alone; you leave us alone. [*To HELEN*] Share and share alike?

Helen [*thinking*]. Share and share alike—after discharging my obligations.

James. Obligations?

Ponting and Stephen. Obligations?

Helen. After carrying out my father's instructions with regard to his old servants.

James [*nodding*]. Oh, aye.

Ponting [*walking about excitedly*]. That's a small matter.

Stephen [*also walking about*]. A trifle—a trifle—

Ponting. Then what it amounts to is this—the estate will be divided into five parts instead of four.

Stephen. Five instead of four—obviously.

Helen [*still thinking*]. No—into six.

James. Six?

Ponting and Stephen. Six!

[*ROSE and LOUISA, with ANN, are moving round the head of the piano, to join PONTING and STEPHEN*]

Rose and Louisa. Six!

Helen [*firmly*]. Six. A share must be given, as a memorial of my father, to one of the hospitals in Linchpool.

Ponting and Stephen [*protestingly*]. Oh . . . !

Rose, Ann, and Louisa. Oh . . . !

Ponting. Entirely unnecessary.

Stephen. Uncalled for.

Helen. I insist.

Ponting [*coming to HELEN*]. My dear Miss Thornhill, believe me—believe me—these cadging hospitals are a great deal too well off as it is.

Helen. I insist that a share shall be given to a Linchpool hospital.

Ponting. I could furnish you with details of maladministration on the part of hospital-boards—

Rose. Shocking mismanagement—

Stephen. There's our own hospital—

Louisa. A scandal.

Stephen. Our Jubilee hospital—

Ann. It's scarcely fit to send your servants to.

Helen [*to JAMES, rising*]. Mr. Mortimore . . .

James [*rising, to PONTING and the rest*]. Miss Thornhill says that one share of the estate's to go to a Linchpool hospital. D'ye hear? [*Moving towards them authoritatively*] That's enough.

[PONTING and STEPHEN bustle to the writing-table, where they each seize a sheet of paper and proceed to reckon. ROSE, ANN, and LOUISA surround them. JAMES stands by, his hands in his pockets, looking on.]

Ponting [sitting at the writing-table—in an undertone]. A hundred and seventy thousand pounds . . .

Stephen [bending over the table—in an undertone]. Six into seventeen—two and carry five . . .

Ponting. Six into fifty—eight and carry two . . .

Stephen. Six into twenty . . .

Ponting. Three . . .

[HELEN seats herself in the chair on the right of the table at the end of the piano. ELKIN and VALLANCE are now in earnest conversation on the extreme left. While the calculation is going on, THADDEUS and PHYLLIS raise their heads and look at each other.]

Stephen. Carry two . . .

Ponting. Six into twenty again—three and carry two . . .

Stephen. Again, six into twenty—three and carry two . . .

Ponting. Six into forty—six and carry four . . .

Stephen. Six into forty-eight . . .

Ponting. Eight . . .

Stephen. Twenty-eight thousand, three hundred and thirty-three pounds, six shilling and eight pence.

Ponting [rising, his paper in his hand]. Twenty-eight thousand apiece.

Thaddeus [rising]. No!

Phyllis [rising]. No!

Thaddeus [as everybody turns to him]. No, no—

James. Eh?

Ponting [to THADDEUS]. What do you mean, sir?

Stephen [to THADDEUS]. What do you mean?

Thaddeus [agitatedly]. I don't take my share—my wife and I don't take our share—we don't touch it—

Phyllis [clinging to THADDEUS]. We won't touch it—oh, no, no, no, no—!

James [to THADDEUS]. Don't be a fool—don't be a fool!

Thaddeus. Fool or no fool—not a penny—

Phyllis. Not a penny of it—

Thaddeus. Not a penny.

Helen. Very well, then. [In a clear voice] Very well; Mr. Thaddeus Mortimore will not accept his share.

Ponting [with alacrity]. He declines it.

Helen. He declines it.

Ponting. That alters the figures—alters the figures—

Stephen. Very materially.

Rose [to ANN and LOUISA]. Only five to share instead of six.

Ann [bewildered]. I don't understand . . .

Louisa [shaking her arm]. Five instead of six!

[Laying his paper on the top of the piano, PONTING produces his pocket-pencil and makes a fresh calculation.

STEPHEN stands at his elbow. ROSE, ANN, and LOUISA gather round them.]

Stephen [in an undertone]. A hundred and seventy thousand . . .

Ponting [in an undertone]. Five into seventeen . . .

Stephen. Three . . .

Ponting. Five into twenty . . .

Stephen. Thirty-four thousand exactly.

Ponting. Thirty-four thousand apiece.

Rose, Ann, and Louisa [to each other]. Thirty-four thousand!

Helen. Wait—wait. Wait, please. [After a short pause] Mr. Thaddeus Mortimore refuses to accept his share. I am sorry—but he appears determined.

Thaddeus. Determined—determined . . .

Phyllis. Determined . . .

Helen. That being so, I ask that his share shall be settled upon his boy and girl. [To ELKIN] Mr. Elkin . . .

[ELKIN advances to her] I suppose an arrangement of that kind can easily be made?

Elkin [with a shrug]. Mr. Thaddeus Mortimore can assent to his share being handed over to the trustees of a Deed of Settlement for the benefit of his children, giving a release to the administrator from all claims in respect of his share.

Helen [turning to THADDEUS]. You've no objection to this?

[THADDEUS and PHYLLIS stare at HELEN dumbly, with parted lips]

They're great friends of mine—Cyril and Joyce—and I hope they'll remain so.

[There is a pause]

Well? You've no right to stand in their light.

[There is a pause]

You won't, surely, stand in their light?

[*There is a pause*]

Don't.

[*Again there is silence, and then PHYLLIS, leaving THADDEUS, totters forward, and drops on her knees before HELEN, bowing her head in HELEN'S lap*]

Phyllis [*weeping*]. Oh-oh-oh . . . !

[*Calmly, HELEN disengages herself from PHYLLIS, rises, and walks away to the fireplace. THADDEUS lifts PHYLLIS from the ground and leads her to the open window. They stand there, facing the garden, she crying upon his shoulder*]

Elkin [*advancing to the middle of the room, with the air of a man who is about to perform an unpleasant task*]. Miss Thornhill . . . [HELEN turns to him]

Mr. Vallance and I— [TO VALLANCE] Mr. Vallance . . . [VALLANCE advances]

Mr. Vallance and I have come to the conclusion that, as all persons interested in this business are *sui juris* and agreeable to the compromise which has been proposed, nobody would be injured by the next-of-kin applying for Letters of Administration.

Vallance [to ELKIN]. Except the Revenue.

Elkin [*indifferently, with a nod*]. The Revenue.

Vallance. The legacy duty being at three per cent. instead of ten.

Elkin [*nodding*]. H'm, h'm! [TO HELEN] But, my dear young lady, we have also to say that, with the information we possess, we do not see our way clear to act in the matter any further.

[JAMES comes forward on the left]

Vallance [to JAMES]. We certainly could not be parties to the making of an affidavit that the deceased died intestate.

Elkin. We couldn't reconcile ourselves to that.

Vallance. We leave it, therefore, to the next-of-kin to take their own course for obtaining Letters of Administration.

Elkin. In fact, we beg to be allowed to withdraw from the affair altogether. I speak for myself, at any rate.

Vallance [*emphatically*]. Altogether.

James [*after a pause*]. Oh—all right, Mr. Elkin; all right, Mr. Vallance.

Helen [to ELKIN]. Then do I lose you . . . ?

Elkin. I am afraid—for the present . . .

Helen [*with dignity*]. As you please. I am very grateful to you for what you have done for me.

Elkin [*looking round*]. If I may offer a last word of advice, it is that you should avoid putting the terms of this compromise into writing.

Vallance [*assentingly*]. Each party must rely upon the other to fulfil the terms honorably.

Elkin [to HELEN]. You have no legal right to enforce those terms; but pray remember that, in the event of any breach of faith, there would be nothing to prevent you propounding the will even after Letters of Administration have been granted.

James. Breach of faith, sir . . . !

Ponting and Stephen [*indignantly*]. Oh—!

James. There's no need, Mr. Elkin—

Elkin [to JAMES]. No, no, no—not the slightest, I'm convinced. [TO HELEN, taking her hand] The little hotel in London—Norfolk Street—?

Helen. Till I'm suited with lodgings.

Elkin. Mrs. Elkin will write.

Helen. My love to her.

[He smiles at her and leaves her, as VALLANCE comes to her and shakes her hand]

Vallance [to HELEN]. Good-bye.

Helen [to VALLANCE]. Good-bye.

Elkin [to those on the left]. Good afternoon.

A Murmur. Good afternoon.

Vallance [to those on the left]. Good afternoon.

A Murmur. Good afternoon.

[JAMES has opened the door. ELKIN and VALLANCE, carrying their bags, go out. JAMES follows them, closing the door]

Ponting [*coming forward*]. Ha! We can replace those gentlemen without much difficulty.

Stephen [*coming forward*]. Old Crake has gone to pieces and this fellow Vallance is playing ducks and drakes with the practice—ducks and drakes.

[PONTING offers his hand to HELEN, who takes it perfunctorily]

Ponting. Greatly indebted to you—greatly indebted to you for meeting us half-way and saving unpleasantness.

Stephen. Pratt is the best lawyer in the town—the best by far.

Ponting [to HELEN]. Nothing like a compromise, provided it can be arrived at—ah—*Stephen*. Without loss of self-respect on both sides. [JAMES returns]

Ponting [to JAMES]. Mortimore, we'll go back to your house. There are two or three things to talk over . . .

[ROSE comes to HELEN as PONTING goes to STEPHEN and JAMES]

Rose [shaking hands with HELEN]. We sha'n't be settled in Carlos Place till the autumn, but directly we are settled . . .

Helen [distantly]. Thank you.

Rose. Everybody flocks to my Tuesdays. Let me have your address, and I'll send you a card.

[ROSE leaves HELEN, making way for LOUISA and STEPHEN]

Louisa [to HELEN]. Don't forget the Crescent. Whenever you want to visit your dear father's birthplace—

Stephen [benevolently]. And if there should be any little ceremony over laying the foundation-stone of the new *Times and Mirror* building—

Louisa. There's the spare bedroom.

[They shake hands with her and, making way for ANN and JAMES, follow the PONTINGS, who have gone out]

Ann [shaking hands with HELEN, gloomily]. The next time you stay at "Ivanhoe," I hope you'll unpack more than one small trunk. But, there—[kissing her] I bear no malice. [She follows the others, leaving JAMES with HELEN]

James [to HELEN, gruffly, wringing her hand]. Much obliged to you, my dear; much obliged to you.

Helen [after glancing over her shoulder, in a whisper]. Mr. Mortimore . . .

James. Eh?

Helen [with a motion of her head in the direction of THADDEUS and PHYLLIS]. These two—these two . . .

James [lowering his voice]. What about 'em?

Helen. She's done a wrong thing, but recollect—you all profit by it. You don't disdain, any of you, to profit by it.

[He looks at her queerly, but straight in the eyes]

Try to make their lives a little easier for them.

James. Easier . . . ?

Helen. Happier. You can influence the others, if you will. [After a pause] Will you?

[He reflects, shakes her hand again, and goes to the door]

James [at the door, sharply]. Tad . . . !

[THADDEUS turns]

See you in the morning. *Phyllis* . . . !

[She also turns to him, half scared at his tone]

See you both in the morning. [Nodding to her] Good-bye, old girl.

[He disappears. HELEN is now standing upon the hearth-rug, her hands behind her, looking down into the grate. THADDEUS and PHYLLIS glance at her; then, guiltily, they too move to the door, passing round the head of the piano]

Phyllis [at the door in a low, hard voice]. Helen . . . [HELEN partly turns]

You're leaving to-morrow. I'll keep out of your way—I'll keep up-stairs to my room—till you've gone.

[She goes out. THADDEUS is following her, when HELEN calls to him]

Helen. Mr. Thaddeus . . .

[He closes the door and advances to her humbly. She comes forward]

There's no reason why I should put your wife to that trouble. It's equally convenient to me to return to London this evening.

[He bows]

Will you kindly ask Kate to pack me?

Thaddeus. Certainly.

Helen. Er—[thinking] Mr. Trist had some calls to make after we left the flower-show. If I've gone before he comes back, tell him I'll write . . .

Thaddeus [bowing again]. You'll write.

Helen. And explain.

Thaddeus [under his breath, looking up quickly]. Explain . . . !

Helen. Explain, among other things, that I've yielded to the desire of the family—

Thaddeus. Desire . . . ?

Helen. That I should accept a share of my father's property.

Thaddeus [falteringly]. Thank you—thank you . . .

Helen [after a while]. That's all, I think.

Thaddeus [offering his hand to her]. I—I wish you every happiness, Miss Thornhill. [She places her hand in his]

I—I wish you every happiness.

[She inclines her head in acknowledgment, and again he goes to the door; and again, turning away to the round

table where she trifles with a book, she calls him]

Helen. Oh, Mr. Tad . . . [*He halts*]
Mr. Tad, I propose that we allow six months to pass in complete silence—six months from to-day . . .

Thaddeus [*dully, not understanding*]. Six months—silence . . . ?

Helen. I mean, without my hearing from your wife. Then, perhaps, she—she will send me another invitation . . .

Thaddeus [*leaving the door, staring at her*]. Invitation . . . ?

Helen. By that time, we shall, all of us, have forgotten a great deal—sha'n't we? [*Facing him*] You'll say that to her for me?

[*He hesitates, then he takes her hands and, bending over them, kisses them repeatedly*]

Thaddeus. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you.

Helen [*withdrawing her hands*]. Find—Kate . . .

[*Once more he makes for the door*]

Thaddeus [*stopping half-way and pulling himself together*]. Miss Thornhill—my wife—my wife—you've seen her at a disadvantage—a terrible disadvantage. Few—few pass through life without being seen—once—or oftener—at a disadvantage. She—she's a splendid woman—a splendid woman—a splendid wife and mother. [*Moving to the door*] They haven't appreciated her—the family haven't appreciated her. They've treated her abominably; for sixteen years she's been treated abominably. [*At the door*] But I've never regretted my marriage—[*defiantly*] I've never regretted it—never, for a single moment—never regretted it—never—never regretted it . . .

[*He disappears. She goes to the table at the end of the piano and takes up her drawing-block and box of crayons. As she does so, TRIST lets himself into the garden. She pauses, listening, and*

presently he enters the room at the open window]

Trist [*throwing his hat on the round table*]. Ah . . . !

Helen [*animatedly*]. Mr. Trist . . .

Trist. Yes?

Helen. Run out to the post-office for me—send a telegram in my name . . .

Trist. With pleasure.

Helen. Gregory's Hotel, Norfolk Street, Strand, London—the manager. Miss Thornhill will arrive to-night—prepare her room—*Trist* [*his face falling*]. To-night!

Helen. I've altered my plans. Gregory's Hotel—Gregory's—

Trist [*picking up his hat*]. Norfolk Street, Strand . . .

Helen [*at the door*]. Mr. Trist—I want you to know—I—I've come into a small fortune.

Trist. A fortune . . . ?

Helen. Nearly thirty thousand pounds.

Trist. Thirty thousand . . . !

Helen. They've persuaded me—persuaded me to take a share of my poor father's money.

Trist. I—I'm glad.

Helen. You—you think I'm doing rightly?

Trist [*depressed*]. Why—of course.

[*She opens the door, and he goes to the window*]

Helen. Mr. Trist . . . ! [*She comes back into the room*] Mr. Trist . . . !

[*He approaches her*]

Mr. Trist—don't—don't . . .

Trist. What?

Helen [*her head drooping*]. Don't let this make any difference between us—will you . . . ?

[*She raises her eyes to his, and they stand looking at each other in silence. Then she turns away abruptly and leaves the room as he hurries through the garden*]

THE END

LILIOM

BY FERENC MOLNAR

Translated from the Hungarian by BENJAMIN F. GLAZER

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FERENC MOLNAR AND HIS PLAYS

FERENC MOLNAR, the most celebrated writer of contemporary Hungary, and the author of *Liliom*, was born in Budapest in 1879. While still in his teens he became a journalist and quickly gained fame through his clever stories and sketches. His reputation in Hungary is based upon his stories and novels as well as his plays, but he is chiefly known to the outside world as a dramatist. He has written over twenty plays of different types, many of which have been produced with success in America. Among these are not only *Liliom* but *The Devil*, *The Swan*, *The Guardsman*, and *The Play's the Thing*.

Molnar's range is remarkable, not only in subject-matter but in method and in tone. His lighter plays resemble those of Schnitzler—farce-comedies such as *The Play's the Thing* and *The Guardsman*, and comedies of manners, such as *The Swan*—plays of light and clever satire and often of brilliant dialogue. Again, like Schnitzler, he often sounds a deeper note, one of real pathos and sincere sentiment, as in *Liliom*; for Molnar is not only a satirist but a poet. His dramaturgy is strikingly original and often daring; for he has no more regard for the conventions of playmaking than he has for those of organized society. An American is likely to regard him as typically mid-European in his entire attitude toward life and in his scheme of values—and to feel refreshed and delighted or depressed and shocked, according to temperament.

Of all Molnar's plays *Liliom* ("The Lily") has made the widest appeal to the public and thus far is assuredly his masterpiece. Much discussed, often regarded as puzzling, it is really perfectly simple in essence; for it is essentially a love story, illustrating two very diverse characters, is intended only as such, and presents no subtle teaching and no special philosophy. Certainly, contrary to what seems the general opinion, it essays no theory of the after-life. Its amusing excursus into the supernatural is a purely fanciful touch that justifies itself simply by its own charm, whether or not it be essential to the play. Human character and passion, love and hate and crime, faithfulness and the sweetness of memory—these are surely sufficiently substantial and earthly and universal elements, when treated with originality and distinction, to give beauty and significance to any play—and these elements *Liliom* possesses in abundance.

Liliom was written in 1909 and was produced first in December of that year in Budapest. Its first production in English was in London in September, 1920, under the title of *The Daisy*, where it was again produced in December, 1926, as *Liliom*. In the meantime, its first production in America had taken place in April, 1920, in New York by The Theatre Guild. In June, 1923, it was produced in Paris. Its success wherever produced was immediate, and through repeated productions in various countries it has become one of the best known of contemporary plays. In 1945 it was successfully converted into the musical play *Carousel* by Richard Rogers and Oscar Hammerstein, II.

CHARACTERS

LILIOM
JULIE
MARIE
MRS. MUSKAT
LOUISE
MRS. HOLLUNDER
FICSUR
YOUNG HOLLUNDER
WOLF BEIFELD
THE CARPENTER
LINZMAN
THE DOCTOR
THE MAGISTRATE
TWO MOUNTED POLICEMEN
TWO PLAINCLOTHES POLICEMEN
TWO HEAVENLY POLICEMEN
THE RICHLY DRESSED MAN
THE POORLY DRESSED MAN
THE GUARD
A SUBURBAN POLICEMAN

The action takes place in Budapest at the present day

LILIOM

THE PROLOGUE

An amusement park on the outskirts of Budapest on a late afternoon in Spring. Barkers stand before the booths of the side-shows haranguing the passing crowd. The strident music of a calliope is heard; laughter, shouts, the scuffle of feet, the signal bells of a merry-go-round.

The merry-go-round is at Center. LILIOM stands at the entrance, a cigarette in his mouth, coaxing the people in. The girls regard him with idolizing glances and screech with pleasure as he playfully pushes them through entrance. Now and then some girl's escort resents the familiarity, whereupon LILIOM's demeanor becomes ugly and menacing, and the cowed escort slinks through the entrance behind his girl or contents himself with a muttered resentful comment.

One girl hands LILIOM a red carnation; he rewards her with a bow and a smile. When the soldier who accompanies her protests, LILIOM cows him with a fierce glance and a threatening gesture. MARIE and JULIE come out of the crowd, and LILIOM favors them with particular notice as they pass into the merry-go-round.

MRS. MUSKAT comes out of the merry-go-round, bringing LILIOM coffee and rolls. LILIOM mounts the barker's stand at the entrance, where he is elevated over everyone on the stage. Here he begins his harangue. Everybody turns toward him. The other booths are gradually deserted. The tumult makes it impossible for the audience to hear what he is saying, but every now and then some witticism of his provokes a storm of laughter which is audible above the din. Many people enter the merry-go-round. Here and there one catches a phrase "Room for one more on the zebra's back," "Which of you ladies?", "Ten heller for adults, five for children," "Step right up."

It is growing darker. A lamplighter crosses the stage, and begins unperturbedly lighting the colored gas-lamps. The whistle of a distant locomotive is heard. Suddenly

the tumult ceases, the lights go out, and the curtain falls in darkness.

SCENE ONE

SCENE—A lonely place in the park, half hidden by trees and shrubbery. Under a flowering acacia tree stands a painted wooden bench. From the distance, faintly, comes the tumult of the amusement park. It is the sunset of the same day.

When the curtain rises the stage is empty.

MARIE enters quickly, pauses at center, and looks back.

Marie. Julie, Julie! [There is no answer.] Do you hear me, Julie? Let her be! Come on. Let her be. [Starts to go back.] [JULIE enters, looks back angrily.]

Julie. Did you ever hear of such a thing? What's the matter with the woman anyway?

Marie. [Looking back again.] Here she comes again.

Julie. Let her come. I didn't do anything to her. All of a sudden she comes up to me and begins to raise a row.

Marie. Here she is. Come on, let's run. [Tries to urge her off.]

Julie. Run? I should say not. What would I want to run for? I'm not afraid of her.

Marie. Oh, come on. She'll only start a fight.

Julie. I'm going to stay right here. Let her start a fight.

Mrs. Muskat. [Entering.] What do you want to run away for? [To JULIE.] Don't worry. I won't eat you. But there's one thing I want to tell you, my dear. Don't let me catch you in my carousel again. I stand for a whole lot, I have to in my business. It makes no difference to me whether my customers are ladies or the likes of you—as long as they pay their money. But when a girl misbehaves herself on my carousel—out she goes. Do you understand?

Julie. Are you talking to me?

Mrs. Muskat. Yes, you! You—chambermaid, you! In my carousel—

Julie. Who did anything in your old carousel? I paid my fare and took my seat and never said a word, except to my friend here.

Marie. No, she never opened her mouth. Liliom came over to her of his own accord.

Mrs. Muskat. It's all the same. I'm not going to get in trouble with the police, and lose my license on account of you—you shabby kitchen maid!

Julie. Shabby yourself.

Mrs. Muskat. You stay out of my carousel! Letting my barker fool with you! Aren't you ashamed of yourself?

Julie. What? What did you say?

Mrs. Muskat. I suppose you think I have no eyes in my head. I see everything that goes on in my carousel. During the whole ride she let Liliom fool with her—the shameless hussy!

Julie. He did not fool with me! I don't let any man fool with me!

Mrs. Muskat. He leaned against you all through the ride!

Julie. He leaned against the panther. He always leans against something, doesn't he? Everybody leans where he wants. I couldn't tell him not to lean, if he always leans, could I? But he didn't lay a hand on me.

Mrs. Muskat. Oh, didn't he? And I suppose he didn't put his hand around your waist, either?

Marie. And if he did? What of it?

Mrs. Muskat. You hold your tongue! No one's asking you—just you keep out of it.

Julie. He put his arm around my waist—just the same as he does to all the girls. He always does that.

Mrs. Muskat. I'll teach him not to do it any more, my dear. No carryings on in my carousel! If you are looking for that sort of thing, you'd better go to the circus! You'll find lots of soldiers there to carry on with!

Julie. You keep your soldiers for yourself!

Marie. Soldiers! As if we wanted soldiers!

Mrs. Muskat. Well, I only want to tell you this, my dear, so that we understand each other perfectly. If you ever stick your nose in my carousel again, you'll wish you hadn't! I'm not going to lose my license on account of the likes of you! People who

don't know how to behave, have got to stay out!

Julie. You're wasting your breath. If I feel like riding on your carousel I'll pay my ten heller and I'll ride. I'd like to see anyone try to stop me!

Mrs. Muskat. Just come and try it, my dear—just come and try it.

Marie. We'll see what'll happen.

Mrs. Muskat. Yes, you will see something happen that never happened before in this park.

Julie. Perhaps you think you could throw me out!

Mrs. Muskat. I'm sure of it, my dear.

Julie. And suppose I'm stronger than you?

Mrs. Muskat. I'd think twice before I'd dirty my hands on a common servant girl. I'll have Liliom throw you out. He knows how to handle your kind.

Julie. You think Liliom would throw me out.

Mrs. Muskat. Yes, my dear, so fast that you won't know what happened to you!

Julie. He'd throw me— [Stops suddenly, for Mrs. MUSKAT has turned away. Both look off stage until LILIOM enters, surrounded by four giggling servant girls.]

Liliom. Go away! Stop following me, or I'll smack your face!

A Little Servant Girl. Well, give me back my handkerchief.

Liliom. Go on now—

The Four Servant Girls. [Simultaneously.] What do you think of him?—My handkerchief!—Give it back to her!—That's a nice thing to do!

The Little Servant Girl. [To Mrs. MUSKAT.] Please, lady, make him—

Mrs. Muskat. Oh, shut up!

Liliom. Will you get out of here? [Makes a threatening gesture—the four servant girls exit in voluble but fearful haste.]

Mrs. Muskat. What have you been doing now?

Liliom. None of your business. [Glances at JULIE.] Have you been starting with her again?

Julie. Mister Liliom, please—

Liliom. [Steps threateningly toward her.] Don't yell!

Julie. [Timidly.] I didn't yell.

Liliom. Well, don't. [To Mrs. MUSKAT.]

What's the matter? What has she done to you?

Mrs. Muskat. What has she done? She's been impudent to me. Just as impudent as she could be! I put her out of the carousel. Take a good look at this innocent thing, Liliom. She's never to be allowed in my carousel again!

Liliom. [To JULIE.] You heard that. Run home, now.

Marie. Come on. Don't waste your time with such people. [Tries to lead JULIE away.]

Julie. No, I won't—

Mrs. Muskat. If she ever comes again, you're not to let her in. And if she gets in before you see her, throw her out. Understand?

Liliom. What has she done, anyhow?

Julie. [Agitated and very earnest.] Mister Liliom—tell me please—honest and truly—if I come into the carousel, will you throw me out?

Mrs. Muskat. Of course he'll throw you out.

Marie. She wasn't talking to you.

Julie. Tell me straight to my face, Mister Liliom, would you throw me out? [They face each other. There is a brief pause.]

Liliom. Yes, little girl, if there was a reason—but if there was no reason, why should I throw you out?

Marie. [To MRS. MUSKAT.] There, you see!

Julie. Thank you, Mister Liliom.

Mrs. Muskat. And I tell you again, if this little slut dares to set her foot in my carousel, she's to be thrown out! I'll stand for no indecency in my establishment.

Liliom. What do you mean—indecency?

Mrs. Muskat. I saw it all. There's no use denying it.

Julie. She says you put your arm around my waist.

Liliom. Me?

Mrs. Muskat. Yes, you! I saw you. Don't play the innocent.

Liliom. Here's something new! I'm not to put my arm around a girl's waist any more! I suppose I'm to ask your permission before I touch another girl!

Mrs. Muskat. You can touch as many girls as you want and as often as you want—for my part you can go as far as you like with any of them—but not this one—I per-

mit no indecency in my carousel. [There is a long pause.]

Liliom. [To MRS. MUSKAT.] And now I'll ask you please to shut your mouth.

Mrs. Muskat. What?

Liliom. Shut your mouth quick, and go back to your carousel.

Mrs. Muskat. What?

Liliom. What did she do to you, anyhow? Tryin' to start a fight with a little pigeon like that . . . just because I touched her?—You come to the carousel as often as you want to, little girl. Come every afternoon, and sit on the panther's back, and if you haven't got the price, Liliom will pay for you. And if anyone dares to bother you, you come and tell me.

Mrs. Muskat. You reprobate!

Liliom. Old witch!

Julie. Thank you, Mister Liliom.

Mrs. Muskat. You seem to think that I can't throw you out, too. What's the reason I can't? Because you are the best barker in the park? Well, you are very much mistaken. In fact, you can consider yourself thrown out already. You're discharged!

Liliom. Very good.

Mrs. Muskat. [Weakening a little.] I can discharge you any time I feel like it.

Liliom. Very good, you feel like discharging me. I'm discharged. That settles it.

Mrs. Muskat. Playing the high and mighty, are you? Conceited pig! Good-for-nothing!

Liliom. You said you'd throw me out, didn't you? Well, that suits me; I'm thrown out.

Mrs. Muskat. [Softening.] Do you have to take up every word I say?

Liliom. It's all right; it's all settled. I'm a good-for-nothing. And a conceited pig. And I'm discharged.

Mrs. Muskat. Do you want to ruin my business?

Liliom. A good-for-nothing? Now I know! And I'm discharged! Very good.

Mrs. Muskat. You're a devil, you are . . . and that woman—

Liliom. Keep away from her!

Mrs. Muskat. I'll get Hollinger to give you such a beating that you'll hear all the angels sing . . . and it won't be the first time, either.

Liliom. Get out of here. I'm discharged. And you get out of here.

Julie. [*Timidly.*] Mister Liliom, if she's willing to say that she hasn't discharged you—

Liliom. You keep out of this.

Julie. [*Timidly.*] I don't want this to happen on account of me.

Liliom. [*To Mrs. MUSKAT, pointing to JULIE.*] Apologize to her!

Marie. A-ha!

Mrs. Muskat. Apologize? To whom?

Liliom. To this little pigeon. Well—are you going to do it?

Mrs. Muskat. If you give me this whole park on a silver plate, and all the gold of the Rothschilds on top of it—I'd—I'd—Let her dare to come into my carousel again and she'll get thrown out so hard that she'll see stars in daylight!

Liliom. In that case, dear lady [*takes off his cap with a flourish*], you are respectfully requested to get out o' here as fast as your legs will carry you—I never beat up a woman yet—except that Holzer woman who I sent to the hospital for three weeks—but—if you don't get out o' here this minute, and let this little squab be, I'll give you the prettiest slap in the jaw you ever had in your life.

Mrs. Muskat. Very good, my son. Now you can go to the devil. Good-bye. You're discharged, and you needn't try to come back, either. [*She exits. It is beginning to grow dark.*]

Marie. [*With grave concern.*] Mister Liliom—

Liliom. Don't you pity me or I'll give you a slap in the jaw. [*To JULIE.*] And don't you pity me, either.

Julie. [*In alarm.*] I don't pity you, Mister Liliom.

Liliom. You're a liar, you are pitying me. I can see it in your face. You're thinking, now that Madame Muskat has thrown him out, Liliom will have to go begging. Huh! Look at me. I'm big enough to get along without a Madame Muskat. I have been thrown out of better jobs than hers.

Julie. What will you do now, Mister Liliom?

Liliom. Now? First of all, I'll go and get myself—a glass of beer. You see, when something happens to annoy me, I always drink a glass of beer.

Julie. Then you are annoyed about losing your job.

Liliom. No, only about where I'm going to get the beer.

Marie. Well—eh—

Liliom. Well—eh—what?

Marie. Well—eh—are you going to stay with us, Mister Liliom?

Liliom. Will you pay for the beer? [*MARIE looks doubtful; he turns to JULIE.*] Will you? [*She does not answer.*] How much money have you got?

Julie. [*Bashfully.*] Eight heller.

Liliom. And you? [*MARIE casts down her eyes and does not reply. LILIAM continues sternly.*] I asked you how much you've got? [*MARIE begins to weep softly.*] I understand. Well, you needn't cry about it. You girls stay here, while I go back to the carousel and get my clothes and things. And when I come back, we'll go to the Hungarian beer-garden. It's all right, I'll pay. Keep your money. [*He exits. MARIE and JULIE stand silent, watching him until he has gone.*]

Marie. Are you sorry for him?

Julie. Are you?

Marie. Yes, a little. Why are you looking after him in that funny way?

Julie. [*Sits down.*] Nothing—except I'm sorry he lost his job.

Marie. [*With a touch of pride.*] It was on our account he lost his job. Because he's fallen in love with you.

Julie. He hasn't at all.

Marie. [*Confidently.*] Oh, yes! he is in love with you. [*Hesitantly, romantically.*] There is someone in love with me, too.

Julie. There is? Who?

Marie. I—I never mentioned it before, because you hadn't a lover of your own—but now you have—and I'm free to speak. [*Very grandiloquently.*] My heart has found its mate.

Julie. You're only making it up.

Marie. No, it's true—my heart's true love—

Julie. Who? Who is he?

Marie. A soldier.

Julie. What kind of a soldier?

Marie. I don't know. Just a soldier. Are there different kinds?

Julie. Many different kinds. There are hussars, artillerymen, engineers, infantry—that's the kind that walks—and—

Marie. How can you tell which is which?
Julie. By their uniforms.

Marie. [After trying to puzzle it out.]
The conductors on the street cars—are they soldiers?

Julie. Certainly not. They're conductors.

Marie. Well, they have uniforms.

Julie. But they don't carry swords or guns.

Marie. Oh! [Thinks it over again; then.] Well, policemen—are they?

Julie. [With a touch of exasperation.] Are they what?

Marie. Soldiers.

Julie. Certainly not. They're just policemen.

Marie. [Triumphantly.] But they have uniforms—and they carry weapons, too.

Julie. You're just as dumb as you can be. You don't go by their uniforms.

Marie. But you said—

Julie. No, I didn't. A letter-carrier wears a uniform, too, but that doesn't make him a soldier.

Marie. But if he carried a gun or a sword, would he be—

Julie. No, he'd still be a letter-carrier. You can't go by guns or swords, either.

Marie. Well, if you don't go by uniforms or the weapons, what do you go by?

Julie. By— [Tries to put it into words; fails; then breaks off suddenly.] Oh, you'll get to know when you've lived in the city long enough. You're nothing but a country girl. When you've lived in the city a year, like I have, you'll know all about it.

Marie. [Half angrily.] Well, how do you know when you see a real soldier?

Julie. By one thing.

Marie. What?

Julie. One thing— [She pauses. MARIE starts to cry.] Oh, what are you crying about?

Marie. Because you're making fun of me. . . . You're a city girl, and I'm just fresh from the country . . . and how am I expected to know a soldier when I see one? . . . You, you ought to tell me, instead of making fun of me—

Julie. All right. Listen then, cry-baby. There's only one way to tell a soldier: by his salute! That's the only way.

Marie. [Joyfully; with a sigh of relief.] Ah—that's good.

Julie. What?

Marie. I say—it's all right then—because Wolf—Wolf— [JULIE laughs derisively.] Wolf—that's his name. [She weeps again.]

Julie. Crying again? What now?

Marie. You're making fun of me again.

Julie. I'm not. But when you say, "Wolf—Wolf—" like that, I have to laugh, don't I? [Archly.] What's his name again?

Marie. I won't tell you.

Julie. All right. If you won't say it, then he's no soldier.

Marie. I'll say it.

Julie. Go on.

Marie. No, I won't. [She weeps again.]

Julie. Then he's not a soldier. I guess he's a letter-carrier—

Marie. No—no—I'd rather say it.

Julie. Well, then.

Marie. [Giggling.] But you mustn't look at me. You look the other way, and I'll say it. [JULIE looks away. MARIE can hardly restrain her own laughter.] Wolf! [She laughs.] That's his real name. Wolf, Wolf, Soldier—Wolf!

Julie. What kind of a uniform does he wear?

Marie. Red.

Julie. Red trousers?

Marie. No.

Julie. Red coat?

Marie. No.

Julie. What then?

Marie. [Triumphantly.] His cap!

Julie. [After a long pause.] He's just a porter, you dunce. Red cap . . . that's a porter—and he doesn't carry a gun or a sword, either.

Marie. [Triumphantly.] But he salutes. You said yourself that was the only way to tell a soldier—

Julie. He doesn't salute at all. He only greets people—

Marie. He salutes me. . . . And if his name is Wolf, that doesn't prove he ain't a soldier—he salutes, and he wears a red cap and he stands on guard all day long outside a big building—

Julie. What does he do there?

Marie. [Seriously.] He spits.

Julie. [With contempt.] He's nothing—nothing but a common porter.

Marie. What's Liliom?

Julie. [Indignantly.] Why speak of him? What has he to do with me?

Marie. The same as Wolf has to do with me. If you can talk to me like that about Wolf, I can talk to you about Liliom.

Julie. He's nothing to me. He put his arm around me in the carousel. I couldn't tell him not to put his arm around me after he had done it, could I?

Marie. I suppose you didn't like him to do it?

Julie. No.

Marie. Then why are you waiting for him? Why don't you go home?

Julie. Why—eh—he said we were to wait for him.

[*LILIAM enters. There is a long silence.*]

Liliom. Are you still here? What are you waiting for?

Marie. You told us to wait.

Liliom. Must you always interfere? No one is talking to you.

Marie. You asked us—why we—

Liliom. Will you keep your mouth shut? What do you suppose I want with two of you? I meant that one of you was to wait. The other can go home.

Marie. All right.

Julie. All right. [*Neither starts to go.*]

Liliom. One of you goes home. [*To MARIE.*] Where do you work?

Marie. At the Breier's, Damjanovitsch Street, Number 20.

Liliom. And you?

Julie. I work there, too.

Liliom. Well, one of you goes home. Which of you wants to stay? [*There is no answer.*] Come on, speak up, which of you stays?

Marie. [*Officiously.*] She'll lose her job if she stays.

Liliom. Who will?

Marie. Julie. She has to be back by seven o'clock.

Liliom. Is that true? Will they discharge you if you're not back on time?

Julie. Yes.

Liliom. Well, wasn't I discharged?

Julie. Yes—you were discharged, too.

Marie. Julie, shall I go?

Julie. I—can't tell you what to do.

Marie. All right—stay if you like.

Liliom. You'll be discharged if you do?

Marie. Shall I go, Julie?

Julie. [*Embarrassed.*] Why do you keep asking me that?

Marie. You know best what to do.

Julie. [*Profoundly moved; slowly.*] It's all right, Marie, you can go home.

Marie. [*Exits reluctantly, but comes back, and says uncertainly.*] Good-night.

[*She waits a moment to see if JULIE will follow her. JULIE does not move. MARIE exits. Meantime it has grown quite dark. During the following scene the gas-lamps far in the distance are lighted one by one. LILIAM and JULIE sit on the bench. From afar, very faintly, comes the music of a calliope. But the music is intermittently heard; now it breaks off, now it resumes again, as if it came down on a fitful wind. Blending with it are the sounds of human voices, now loud, now soft; the blare of a toy trumpet; the confused noises of the show-booths. It grows progressively darker until the end of the scene. There is no moonlight. The spring iridescence glows in the deep blue sky.*]

Liliom. Now we're both discharged. [*She does not answer. From now on they speak gradually lower and lower until the end of the scene, which is played almost in whispers. Whistles softly, then.*] Have you had your supper?

Julie. No.

Liliom. Want to go eat something at the Garden?

Julie. No.

Liliom. Anywhere else?

Julie. No.

Liliom. [*Whistles softly, then.*] You don't come to this park very often, do you? I've only seen you three times. Been here oftener than that?

Julie. Oh, yes.

Liliom. Did you see me?

Julie. Yes.

Liliom. And did you know I was Liliom?

Julie. They told me.

Liliom. [*Whistles softly, then.*] Have you got a sweetheart?

Julie. No.

Liliom. Don't lie to me.

Julie. I haven't. If I had, I'd tell you. I've never had one.

Liliom. What an awful liar you are. I've got a good mind to go away and leave you here.

Julie. I've never had one.

Liliom. Tell that to someone else.

Julie. [*Reproachfully.*] Why do you insist I have?

Liliom. Because you stayed here with me the first time I asked you to. You know your way around, you do.

Julie. No, I don't, Mister Liliom.

Liliom. I suppose you'll tell me you don't know why you're sitting here—like this, in the dark, alone with me—You wouldn't 'a' stayed so quick, if you hadn't done it before—with some soldier, maybe. This isn't the first time. You wouldn't have been so ready to stay if it was—what did you stay for, anyhow?

Julie. So you wouldn't be left alone.

Liliom. Alone! God, you're dumb! I don't need to be alone. I can have all the girls I want. Not only servant girls like you, but cooks and governesses, even French girls. I could have twenty of them if I wanted to.

Julie. I know, Mister Liliom.

Liliom. What do you know?

Julie. That all the girls are in love with you. But that's not why I stayed. I stayed because you've been so good to me.

Liliom. Well, then you can go home.

Julie. I don't want to go home now.

Liliom. And what if I go away and leave you sitting here?

Julie. If you did, I wouldn't go home.

Liliom. Do you know what you remind me of? A sweetheart I had once—I'll tell you how I met her— One night, at closing time, we had put out the lights in the earousel, and just as I was—

[*He is interrupted by the entrance of two plainclothes policemen. They take their stations on either side of the bench. They are police, searching the park for vagabonds.*]

First Policeman. What are you doing there?

Liliom. Me?

Second Policeman. Stand up when you're spoken to! [*He taps LILIOM imperatively on the shoulder.*]

First Policeman. What's your name?

Liliom. Andreas Zavoczki. [*JULIE begins to weep softly.*]

Second Policeman. Stop your bawling. We're not goin' to eat you. We are only making our rounds.

First Policeman. See that he doesn't get away. [*The SECOND POLICEMAN steps closer to LILIOM.*] What's your business?

Liliom. Barker and bouncer.

Second Policeman. They call him Liliom, Chief. We've had him up a couple of times.

First Policeman. So that's who you are! Who do you work for now?

Liliom. I work for the widow Muskat.

First Policeman. What are you hanging around here for?

Liliom. We're just sitting here—me and this girl.

First Policeman. Your sweetheart?

Liliom. No.

First Policeman. [*To JULIE.*] And who are you?

Julie. Julie Zeller.

First Policeman. Servant girl?

Julie. Maid of All Work for Mister Georg Breier, Number Twenty Damjanovitsch Street.

First Policeman. Show your hands.

Second Policeman. [*After examining JULIE's hand.*] Servant girl.

First Policeman. Why aren't you at home? What are you doing out here with him?

Julie. This is my day out, sir.

First Policeman. It would be better for you if you didn't spend it sitting around with a fellow like this.

Second Policeman. They'll be disappearing in the bushes as soon as we turn our backs.

First Policeman. He's only after your money. We know this fine fellow. He picks up you silly servant girls and takes what money you have. Tomorrow you'll probably be coming around to report him. If you do, I'll throw you out.

Julie. I haven't any money, sir.

First Policeman. Do you hear that, Liliom?

Liliom. I'm not looking for her money.

Second Policeman. [*Nudging him warningly.*] Keep your mouth shut.

First Policeman. It is my duty to warn you, my child, what kind of company

you're in. He makes a specialty of servant girls. That's why he works in a carousel. He gets hold of a girl, promises to marry her, then he takes her money and her ring.

Julie. But I haven't got a ring.

Second Policeman. You're not to talk unless you're asked a question.

First Policeman. You be thankful that I'm warning you. It's nothing to me what you do. I'm not your father, thank God. But I'm telling you what kind of a fellow he is. By tomorrow morning you'll be coming around to us to report him. Now you be sensible and go home. You needn't be afraid of him. This officer will take you home if you're afraid.

Julie. Do I have to go?

First Policeman. No, you don't have to go.

Julie. Then I'll stay, sir.

First Policeman. Well, you've been warned.

Julie. Yes, sir. Thank you, sir.

First Policeman. Come on, Berkovics.

[*THE POLICEMEN exit. JULIE and*

LILIAM sit on the bench again.

There is a brief pause.]

Julie. Well, and what then?

Liliom. [*Fails to understand.*] Huh?

Julie. You were beginning to tell me a story.

Liliom. Me?

Julie. Yes, about a sweetheart. You said, one night, just as they were putting out the lights of the carousel— That's as far as you got.

Liliom. Oh, yes, yes, just as the lights were going out, someone came along—a little girl with a big shawl—you know— She came—eh—from— Say—tell me—ain't you—that is, ain't you at all—afraid of me? The officer told you what kind of a fellow I am—and that I'd take your money away from you—

Julie. You couldn't take it away—I haven't got any. But if I had—I'd—I'd give it to you—I'd give it all to you.

Liliom. You would?

Julie. If you asked me for it.

Liliom. Have you ever had a fellow you gave money to?

Julie. No.

Liliom. Haven't you ever had a sweetheart?

Julie. No.

Liliom. Someone you used to go walking with. You've had one like that?

Julie. Yes.

Liliom. A soldier?

Julie. He came from the same village I did.

Liliom. That's what all the soldiers say. Where do you come from, anyway?

Julie. Not far from here.

[*There is a pause.*]

Liliom. Were you in love with him?

Julie. Why do you keep asking me that all the time, Mister Liliom? I wasn't in love with him. We only went walking together.

Liliom. Where did you walk?

Julie. In the park.

Liliom. And your virtue? Where did you lose that?

Julie. I haven't got any virtue.

Liliom. Well, you had once.

Julie. No, I never had. I'm a respectable girl.

Liliom. Yes, but you gave the soldier something.

Julie. Why do you question me like that, Mister Liliom?

Liliom. Did you give him something?

Julie. You have to. But I didn't love him.

Liliom. Do you love me?

Julie. No, Mister Liliom.

Liliom. Then why do you stay here with me?

Julie. Um—nothing.

[*There is a pause. The music from afar is plainly heard.*]

Liliom. Want to dance?

Julie. No. I have to be very careful.

Liliom. Of what?

Julie. My—character.

Liliom. Why?

Julie. Because I'm never going to marry. If I was going to marry, it would be different. Then I wouldn't need to worry so much about my character. It doesn't make any difference if you're married. But I shan't marry—and that's why I've got to take care to be a respectable girl.

Liliom. Suppose I were to say to you—I'll marry you.

Julie. You?

Liliom. That frightens you, doesn't it?

You're thinking of what the officer said and you're afraid.

Julie. No, I'm not, Mister Liliom. I don't pay any attention to what he said.

Liliom. But you wouldn't dare to marry anyone like me, would you?

Julie. I know that—that—if I loved anyone—it wouldn't make any difference to me what he—even if I died for it.

Liliom. But you wouldn't marry a rough guy like me—that is,—eh—if you loved me—

Julie. Yes, I would—if I loved you, Mister Liliom.

[*There is a pause.*]

Liliom. [*Whispers.*] Well,—you just said—didn't you?—that you don't love me. Well, why don't you go home then?

Julie. It's too late now, they'd all be asleep.

Liliom. Locked out?

Julie. Certainly.

[*They are silent a while.*]

Liliom. I think—that even a low-down good-for-nothing—can make a man of himself.

Julie. Certainly.

[*They are silent again. A lamp-lighter crosses the stage, lights the lamp over the bench, and exits.*]

Liliom. Are you hungry?

Julie. No. [*Another pause.*]

Liliom. Suppose—you had some money—and I took it from you?

Julie. Then you could take it, that's all.

Liliom. [*After another brief silence.*] All I have to do—is go back to her—that Muskat woman—she'll be glad to get me back—then I'd be earning my wages again. [*She is silent. The twilight folds darker about them.*]

Julie. [*Very softly.*] Don't go back—to her— [*Pause.*]

Liliom. There are a lot of acacia trees around here. [*Pause.*]

Julie. Don't go back to her— [*Pause.*]

Liliom. She'd take me back the minute I asked her. I know why—she knows, too— [*Pause.*]

Julie. I can smell them, too—acacia blossoms—

[*There is a pause. Some blossoms drift down from the tree-top to*

the bench. LILIOM picks one up and smells it.]

Liliom. White acacias!

Julie. [*After a brief pause.*] The wind brings them down.

[*They are silent. There is a long pause before.*]

SCENE TWO

SCENE—A photographer's "studio," operated by the HOLLUNDERS, on the fringe of the park. It is a dilapidated hovel. The general entrance is Back Left. Back Right there is a window with a sofa before it. The outlook is on the amusement park with perhaps a small Ferris-wheel or the scaffolding of a "scenic-railway" in the background.

The door to the kitchen is up Left and a black-curtained entrance to the dark-room is down Left. Just in front of the dark-room stands the camera on its tripod. Against the back wall, between the door and window, stands the inevitable photographer's background-screen, ready to be wheeled into place.

It is forenoon. When the curtain rises, MARIE and JULIE are discovered.

Marie. And he beat up Hollinger?

Julie. Yes, he gave him an awful licking.

Marie. But Hollinger is bigger than he is.

Julie. He licked him just the same. It isn't size that counts, you know, it's cleverness. And Liliom's awful quick.

Marie. And then he was arrested?

Julie. Yes, they arrested him, but they let him go the next day. That makes twice in the two months we've been living here that Liliom's been arrested and let go again.

Marie. Why do they let him go?

Julie. Because he is innocent.

[*MOTHER HOLLUNDER, a very old woman, sharp-tongued, but in reality quite warm-hearted beneath her formidable exterior, enters at back carrying a few sticks of firewood, and scolding, half to herself.*]

Mother Hollunder. Always wanting something, but never willing to work for it. He won't work, and he won't steal, but he'll use up a poor old widow's last bit of

firewood. He'll do that cheerfully enough! A big, strong lout like that lying around all day resting his lazy bones! He ought to be ashamed to look decent people in the face.

Julie. I'm sorry, Mother Hollunder. . . .

Mother Hollunder. Sorry! Better be sorry the lazy good-for-nothing ain't in jail where he belongs instead of in the way of honest, hard-working people. [*She exits into the kitchen.*]

Marie. Who's that?

Julie. Mrs. Hollunder—my aunt. This is her [*with a sweeping gesture that takes in the camera, dark-room and screen*] studio. She lets us live here for nothing.

Marie. What's she fetching the wood for?

Julie. She brings us everything we need. If it weren't for her I don't know what would become of us. She's a good-hearted soul even if her tongue is sharp.

[*There is a pause.*]

Marie. [*Shyly.*] Do you know—I've found out. He's not a soldier.

Julie. Do you still see him?

Marie. Oh, yes.

Julie. Often?

Marie. Very often. He's asked me—

Julie. To marry you?

Marie. To marry me.

Julie. You see—that proves he isn't a soldier.

[*There is another pause.*]

Marie. [*Abashed, yet a bit boastfully.*] Do you know what I'm doing—I'm flirting with him.

Julie. Flirting?

Marie. Yes. He asks me to go to the park—and I say I can't go. Then he coaxes me, and promises me a new scarf for my head if I go. But I don't go—even then. . . . So then he walks all the way home with me—and I bid him good-night at the door.

Julie. Is that what you call flirting?

Marie. Um-hm! It's sinful, but it's so thrilling.

Julie. Do you ever quarrel?

Marie. [*Grandly.*] Only when our Passionate Love surges up.

Julie. Your passionate love?

Marie. Yes. . . . He takes my hand and we walk along together. Then he wants to swing hands, but I won't let him. I say: "Don't swing my hand"; and he says, "Don't be so stubborn." And then

he tries to swing my hand again, but still I don't let him. And for a long time I don't let him—until in the end I let him. Then we walk along swinging hands—up and down, up and down—just like this. *That is Passionate Love.* It's sinful, but it's awfully thrilling.

Julie. You're happy, aren't you?

Marie. Happier than—anything— But the most beautiful thing on earth is Ideal Love.

Julie. What kind is that?

Marie. Daylight comes about three in the morning this time of the year. When we've been up that long we're all through with flirting and Passionate Love—and then our Ideal Love comes to the surface. It comes like this: I'll be sitting on the bench and Wolf, he holds my hand tight—and he puts his cheek against my cheek and we don't talk . . . we just sit there very quiet. . . . And after a while he gets sleepy, and his head sinks down, and he falls asleep . . . but even in his sleep he holds tight to my hand. And I—I sit perfectly still just looking around me and taking long, deep breaths—for by that time it's morning and the trees and flowers are fresh with dew. But Wolf doesn't smell anything because he's so fast asleep. And I get awfully sleepy myself, but I don't sleep. And we sit like that for a long time. That is Ideal Love—

[*There is a long pause.*]

Julie. [*Regretfully; uneasily.*] He went out last night and he hasn't come home yet.

Marie. Here are sixteen Kreuzer. It was supposed to be carfare to take my young lady to the conservatory—eight there and eight back—but I made her walk. Here—save it with the rest.

Julie. This makes three gulden, forty-six.

Marie. Three gulden, forty-six.

Julie. He won't work at all.

Marie. Too lazy?

Julie. No. He never learned a trade, you see, and he can't just go and be a day-laborer—so he just does nothing.

Marie. That ain't right.

Julie. No. Have the Breiers got a new maid yet?

Marie. They've had three since you left. You know, Wolf's going to take a new job.

He's going to work for the city. He'll get rent free, too.

Julie. He won't go back to work at the carousel either. I ask him why, but he won't tell me— Last Monday he hit me.

Marie. Did you hit him back?

Julie. No.

Marie. Why don't you leave him?

Julie. I don't want to.

Marie. I would. I'd leave him.

[*There is a strained silence.*]

Mother Hollunder. [*Enters, carrying a pot of water; muttering aloud.*] He can play cards, all right. He can fight, too; and take money from poor servant girls. And the police turn their heads the other way— The carpenter was here.

Julie. Is that water for the soup?

Mother Hollunder. The carpenter was here. There's a man for you! Dark, handsome, lots of hair, a respectable widower with two children—and money, and a good paying business.

Julie. [*To MARIE.*] It's three gulden sixty-six, not forty-six.

Marie. Yes, that's what I make it—sixty-six.

Mother Hollunder. He wants to take her out of this and marry her. This is the fifth time he's been here. He has two children, but—

Julie. Please don't bother, Aunt Hollunder, I'll get the water myself.

Mother Hollunder. He's waiting outside now.

Julie. Send him away.

Mother Hollunder. He'll only come back again—and first thing you know that vagabond will get jealous and there'll be a fight. [*Goes out, muttering.*] Oh, he's ready enough to fight, he is. Strike a poor little girl like that! Ought to be ashamed of himself! And the police just let him go on doing as he pleases. [*Still scolding, she exits at back.*]

Marie. A carpenter wants to marry you?

Julie. Yes.

Marie. Why don't you?

Julie. Because—

Marie. Liliom doesn't support you, and he beats you—he thinks he can do whatever he likes just because he's Liliom. He's a bad one.

Julie. He's not really bad.

Marie. That night you sat on the bench together—he was gentle then.

Julie. Yes, he was gentle.

Marie. And afterwards he got wild again.

Julie. Afterwards he got wild—sometimes. But that night on the bench . . . he was gentle. He's gentle now, sometimes, very gentle. After supper, when he stands there and listens to the music of the carousel, something comes over him—and he is gentle.

Marie. Does he say anything?

Julie. He doesn't say anything. He gets thoughtful and very quiet, and his big eyes stare straight ahead of him.

Marie. Into your eyes?

Julie. Not exactly. He's unhappy because he isn't working. That's really why he hit me on Monday.

Marie. That's a fine reason for hitting you! Beats his wife because he isn't working, the ruffian!

Julie. It preys on his mind—

Marie. Did he hurt you?

Julie. [*Very eagerly.*] Oh, no.

Mrs. Muskat. [*Enters haughtily.*] Good morning. Is Liliom home?

Julie. No.

Mrs. Muskat. Gone out?

Julie. He hasn't come home yet.

Mrs. Muskat. I'll wait for him. [*She sits down.*]

Marie. You've got a lot of gall—to come here.

Mrs. Muskat. Are you the lady of the house, my dear? Better look out or you'll get a slap in the mouth.

Marie. How dare you set foot in Julie's house?

Mrs. Muskat. [*To JULIE.*] Pay no attention to her, my child. You know what brings me here. That vagabond, that good-for-nothing. I've come to give him his bread and butter back.

Marie. He's not dependent on you for his bread.

Mrs. Muskat. [*To JULIE.*] Just ignore her, my child. She's just ignorant.

Marie. [*Going.*] Good-bye.

Julie. Good-bye.

Marie. [*In the doorway, calling back.*] Sixty-six.

Julie. Yes, sixty-six.

Marie. Good-bye. [*She goes out. JULIE starts to go toward the kitchen.*]

Mrs. Muskat. I paid him a krone a day, and on Sunday a gulden. And he got all the beer and cigars he wanted from the customers. [JULIE pauses on the threshold, but does not answer.] And he'd rather starve than beg my pardon. Well, I don't insist on that. I'll take him back without it. [JULIE does not answer.] The fact is the people ask for him—and, you see, I've got to consider business first. It's nothing to me if he starves. I wouldn't be here at all, if it wasn't for business— [She pauses, for LILLOM and FICSUR have entered.]

Julie. Mrs. Muskat is here.

Lilom. I see she is.

Julie. You might say good-morning.

Lilom. What for? And what do you want, anyhow?

Julie. I don't want anything.

Lilom. Then keep your mouth shut. Next thing you'll be starting to nag again about my being out all night and out of work and living on your relations—

Julie. I'm not saying anything.

Lilom. But it's all on the tip of your tongue—I know you—now don't start or you'll get another.

[He paces angrily up and down.

They are all a bit afraid of him, and shrink and look away as he passes them. FICSUR shambles from place to place, his eyes cast down as if he were searching for something on the floor.]

Mrs. Muskat. [Suddenly, to FICSUR.] You're always dragging him out to play cards and drink with you. I'll have you locked up, I will.

Ficsur. I don't want to talk to you. You're too common. [He goes out by the door at back and lingers there in plain view. There is a pause.]

Julie. Mrs. Muskat is here.

Lilom. Well, why doesn't she open her mouth, if she has anything to say?

Mrs. Muskat. Why do you go around with this man. Ficsur? He'll get you mixed up in one of his robberies first thing you know.

Lilom. What's it to you who I go with? I do what I please. What do you want?

Mrs. Muskat. You know what I want.

Lilom. No, I don't.

Mrs. Muskat. What do you suppose I

want? Think I've come just to pay a social call?

Lilom. Do I owe you anything?

Mrs. Muskat. Yes, you do—but that's not what I came for. You're a fine one to come to for money! You earn so much these days! You know very well what I'm here for.

Lilom. You've got Hollinger at the carousel, haven't you?

Mrs. Muskat. Sure I have.

Lilom. Well, what else do you want? He's as good as I am.

Mrs. Muskat. You're quite right, my boy. He's every bit as good as you are. I'd not dream of letting him go. But one isn't enough any more. There's work enough for two—

Lilom. One was enough when I was there.

Mrs. Muskat. Well, I might let Hollinger go—

Lilom. Why let him go, if he's so good?

Mrs. Muskat. [Shrugs her shoulders.] Yes, he's good. [Not once until now has she looked at LILLOM.]

Lilom. [To JULIE.] Ask your aunt if I can have a cup of coffee. [JULIE exits into the kitchen.] So Hollinger is good, is he?

Mrs. Muskat. [Crosses to him and looks him in the face.] Why don't you stay home and sleep at night? You're a sight to look at.

Lilom. He's good, is he?

Mrs. Muskat. Push your hair back from your forehead.

Lilom. Let my hair be. It's nothing to you.

Mrs. Muskat. All right. But if I'd told you to let it hang down over your eyes you'd have pushed it back—I hear you've been beating her, this—this—

Lilom. None of your business.

Mrs. Muskat. You're a fine fellow! Beating a skinny little thing like that! If you're tired of her, leave her, but there's no use beating the poor—

Lilom. Leave her, eh? You'd like that, wouldn't you?

Mrs. Muskat. Don't flatter yourself. [Quite embarrassed.] Serves me right, too. If I had any sense I wouldn't have run after you. . . . My God, the things one must do for the sake of business! If I

could only sell the carousel I wouldn't be sitting here. . . . Come, Liliom, if you have any sense, you'll come back. I'll pay you well.

Liliom. The carousel is crowded just the same. . . . *without me?*

Mrs. Muskat. Crowded, yes—but it's not the same.

Liliom. Then you admit that you *do* miss me.

Mrs. Muskat. Miss you? Not I. But the silly girls miss you. They're always asking for you. Well, are you going to be sensible and come back?

Liliom. And leave—her?

Mrs. Muskat. You beat her, don't you?

Liliom. No, I don't beat her. What's all this damn fool talk about beating her? I hit her once—that was all—and now the whole city seems to be talking about it. You don't call that beating her, do you?

Mrs. Muskat. All right, all right. I take it back. I don't want to get mixed up in it.

Liliom. Beating her! As if I'd beat her—

Mrs. Muskat. I can't make out why you're so concerned about her. You've been married to her two months—it's plain to see that you're sick of it—and out there is the carousel—and the show booths—and money—and you'd throw it all away. For what? Heavens, how can anyone be such a fool? [*Looks at him appraisingly.*] Where have you been all night? You look awful.

Liliom. It's no business of yours.

Mrs. Muskat. You never used to look like that. This life is telling on you. [*Pauses.*] Do you know—I've got a new organ.

Liliom. [*Softly.*] I know.

Mrs. Muskat. How did you know?

Liliom. You can hear it—from here.

Mrs. Muskat. It's a good one, eh?

Liliom. [*Wistfully.*] Very good. Fine. It roars and snorts—so fine.

Mrs. Muskat. You should hear it close by—it's heavenly. Even the carousel seems to know . . . it goes quicker. I got rid of those two horses—you know, the ones with the broken ears?

Liliom. What have you put in their places?

Mrs. Muskat. Guess.

Liliom. Zebras?

Mrs. Muskat. No—an automobile.

Liliom. [*Transported.*] An automobile—

Mrs. Muskat. Yes. If you've got any sense you'll come back. What good are you doing here? Out there is your *art*, the only thing you're fit for. You are an artist, not a respectable married man.

Liliom. Leave her—this little—

Mrs. Muskat. She'll be better off. She'll go back and be a servant girl again. As for you—you're an artist and you belong among artists. All the beer you want, cigars, a krone a day and a gulden on Sunday, and the girls, Liliom, the girls—I've always treated you right, haven't I? I bought you a watch, and—

Liliom. She's not that kind. She'd never be a servant girl again.

Mrs. Muskat. I suppose you think she'd kill herself. Don't worry. Heavens, if every girl was to commit suicide just because her— [*Finishes with a gesture.*]

Liliom. [*Stares at her a moment, considering, then with sudden, smiling animation.*] So the people don't like Hollinger?

Mrs. Muskat. You know very well they don't, you rascal.

Liliom. Well—

Mrs. Muskat. You've always been happy at the carousel. It's a great life—pretty girls and beer and cigars and music—a great life and an easy one. I'll tell you what—come back and I'll give you a ring that used to belong to my dear departed husband. Well, will you come?

Liliom. She's not that kind. She'd never be a servant girl again. But—but—for my part—if I decide—that needn't make any difference. I can go on living with her even if I do go back to my art—

Mrs. Muskat. My God!

Liliom. What's the matter?

Mrs. Muskat. Who ever heard of a married man—I suppose you think all girls would be pleased to know that you were running home to your wife every night. It's ridiculous! When the people found out they'd laugh themselves sick—

Liliom. I know what you want.

Mrs. Muskat. [*Refuses to meet his gaze.*] You flatter yourself.

Liliom. You'll give me that ring, too?

Mrs. Muskat. [*Pushes the hair back from his forehead.*] Yes.

Liliom. I'm not happy in this house.

Mrs. Muskat. [Still stroking his hair.] Nobody takes care of you.

[They are silent. JULIE enters, carrying a cup of coffee. MRS. MUSKAT removes her hand from LILIAM'S head. There is a pause.]

Liliom. Do you want anything?

Julie. No. [There is a pause. She goes out slowly into the kitchen.]

Mrs. Muskat. The old woman says there is a carpenter, a widower, who—

Liliom. I know—I know—

Julie. [Reëntering.] Liliom, before I forget, I have something to tell you.

Liliom. All right.

Julie. I've been wanting to tell you—in fact, I was going to tell you yesterday—

Liliom. Go ahead.

Julie. But I must tell you alone—if you'll come in—it will only take a minute.

Liliom. Don't you see I'm busy now? Here I am talking business and you interrupt with—

Julie. It'll only take a minute.

Liliom. Get out of here, or—

Julie. But I tell you it will only take a minute—

Liliom. Will you get out of here?

Julie. [Courageously.] No.

Liliom. [Rising.] What's that!

Julie. No.

Mrs. Muskat. [Rises, too.] Now don't start fighting. I'll go out and look at the photographs in the show-case a while and come back later for your answer. [She goes out at back.]

Julie. You can hit me again if you like—don't look at me like that. I'm not afraid of you. . . . I'm not afraid of anyone. I told you I had something to tell you.

Liliom. Well, out with it—quick.

Julie. I can't tell you so quick. Why don't you drink your coffee?

Liliom. Is that what you wanted to tell me?

Julie. No. By the time you've drunk your coffee I'll have told you.

Liliom. [Gets the coffee and sips it.] Well?

Julie. Yesterday my head ached—and you asked me—

Liliom. Yes—

Julie. Well—you see—that's what it is—

Liliom. Are you sick?

Julie. No. . . . But you wanted to know what my headaches came from—and you said I seemed—changed.

Liliom. Did I? I guess I meant the carpenter.

Julie. I've been—what? The carpenter? No. It's something entirely different—it's awful hard to tell—but you'll have to know sooner or later—I'm not a bit—scared—because it's a perfectly natural thing—

Liliom. [Puts the coffee cup on the table.] What?

Julie. When—when a man and woman—live together—

Liliom. Yes.

Julie. I'm going to have a baby. [She goes out swiftly at back. There is a pause. FICSUR appears at the open window and looks in.]

Liliom. Ficsur! [FICSUR sticks his head in.] Say, Ficsur,—Julie is going to have a baby.

Ficsur. Yes? What of it?

Liliom. Nothing. [Suddenly.] Get out of here.

[FICSUR'S head is quickly withdrawn. MRS. MUSKAT reënters.]

Mrs. Muskat. Has she gone?

Liliom. Yes.

Mrs. Muskat. I might as well give you ten kronen in advance. [Opens her purse. LILIAM takes up his coffee cup.] Here you are. [She proffers some coins. LILIAM ignores her.] Why don't you take it?

Liliom. [Very nonchalantly, his cup poised ready to drink.] Go home, Mrs. Muskat.

Mrs. Muskat. What's the matter with you?

Liliom. Go home [sips his coffee] and let me finish my coffee in peace. Don't you see I'm at breakfast?

Mrs. Muskat. Have you gone crazy?

Liliom. Will you get out of here? [Turns to her threateningly.]

Mrs. Muskat. [Restoring the coins to her purse.] I'll never speak to you again as long as you live.

Liliom. That worries me a lot.

Mrs. Muskat. Good-bye!

Liliom. Good-bye. [As she goes out, he calls.] Ficsur! [FICSUR enters.] Tell me, Ficsur. You said you knew a way to get a whole lot of money—

Ficsur. Sure I do.

Liliom. How much?

Ficsur. More than you ever had in your life before. You leave it to an old hand like me.

Mother Hollunder. [*Enters from the kitchen.*] In the morning he must have his coffee, and at noon his soup, and in the evening coffee again—and plenty of firewood—and I'm expected to furnish it all. Give me back my cup and saucer.

[*The show-booths of the amusement park have opened for business. The familiar noises begin to sound; clear above them all, but far in the distance, sounds the organ of the carousel.*]

Liliom. Now, Aunt Hollunder.

[*From now until the fall of the curtain it is apparent that the sound of the organ makes him more and more uneasy.*]

Mother Hollunder. And you, you vagabond, get out of here this minute or I'll call my son—

Ficsur. I have nothing to do with the likes of him. He's too common. [*But he slinks out at back.*]

Liliom. Aunt Hollunder!

Mother Hollunder. What now?

Liliom. When your son was born—when you brought him into the world—

Mother Hollunder. Well?

Liliom. Nothing.

Mother Hollunder. [*Muttering as she goes out.*] Sleep it off, you good-for-nothing lout. Drink and play cards all night long—that's all you know how to do—and take the bread out of poor people's mouths—you can do that, too. [*Exit.*]

Liliom. Ficsur!

Ficsur. [*At the window.*] Julie's going to have a baby. You told me before.

Liliom. This scheme—about the cashier of the leather factory—there's money in it—

Ficsur. Lots of money—but—it takes two to pull it off.

Liliom. [*Meditatively.*] Yes. [*Uneasily.*] All right, Ficsur. Go away—and come back later.

[*Ficsur vanishes. The organ in the distant carousel drones incessantly. Liliom listens a while, then goes to the door and calls.*]

Liliom. Aunt Hollunder! [*With naïve*

joy.] Julie's going to have a baby. [*Then he goes to the window, jumps on the sofa, looks out. Suddenly, in a voice that overtops the droning of the organ, he shouts as if addressing the far-off carousel.*] I'm going to be a father.

Julie. [*Enters from the kitchen.*] Liliom! What's the matter? What's happened?

Liliom. [*Coming down from the sofa.*] Nothing.

[*Throws himself on the sofa, buries his face in the cushion. JULIE watches him a moment, comes over to him and covers him with a shawl. Then she goes on tip-toe to the door at back and remains standing in the doorway, looking out and listening to the droning of the organ.*]

SCENE THREE

SCENE—*The setting is the same, later that afternoon. LILIOM is sitting opposite FICSUR, who is teaching him a song. JULIE hovers in the background, engaged in some household task.*

Ficsur. Listen now. Here's the third verse. [*Sings hoarsely.*]

Look out, look out, my pretty lad,
The damn police are on your trail;
The nicest girl you ever had
Has now commenced to weep and wail:
Look out here comes the damn police,
The damn police,
The damn police,
Look out here comes the damn police,
They'll get you every time.

Liliom. [*Sings.*]

Look out, look out, my pretty lad,
The damn police—

Ficsur, Liliom. [*Sing together.*]

Are on your trail
The nicest girl you ever had
Has now commenced to weep and wail.

Liliom. [*Alone.*]

Look out here comes the damn police,
The damn police,
The damn police—

[*JULIE, troubled and uneasy, looks from one to the other, then exits into the kitchen.*]

Ficsur. [*When she has gone, comes quickly over to LILIOM and speaks fur*

tively.] As you go down Franzen Street you come to the railroad embankment. Beyond that—all the way to the leather factory—there's not a thing in sight, not even a watchman's hut.

Liliom. And does he always come that way?

Ficsur. Yes. Not along the embankment, but down below along the path across the fields. Since last year he's been going alone. Before that he always used to have someone with him.

Liliom. Every Saturday?

Ficsur. Every Saturday.

Liliom. And the money? Where does he keep it?

Ficsur. In a leather bag. The whole week's pay for the workmen at the factory.

Liliom. Much?

Ficsur. Sixteen thousand kronen. Quite a haul, what?

Liliom. What's his name?

Ficsur. Linzman. He's a Jew.

Liliom. The cashier?

Ficsur. Yes—but when he gets a knife between his ribs—or if I smash his skull for him—he won't be a cashier any more.

Liliom. Does he have to be killed?

Ficsur. No, he doesn't have to be. He can give up the money *without* being killed—but most of these cashiers are peculiar—they'd rather be killed.

[*JULIE* reënters, pretends to get something on the other side of the room, then exits at back. During the ensuing dialogue she keeps coming in and out in the same way, showing plainly that she is suspicious and anxious. She attempts to overhear what they are saying and, in spite of their caution, does catch a word here and there, which adds to her disquiet. *FICSUR*, catching sight of her, abruptly changes the conversation.]

Ficsur. And the next verse is:

And when you're in the prison cell
They'll feed you bread and water.

Ficsur, Liliom. [Sing together.]

They'll make your little sweetheart tell
Them all the things you brought her.
Look out here comes the damn police.
The damn police,
The damn police.

Look out here comes the damn police
They'll get you every time.

Liliom. [Sings alone.]

And when you're in the prison cell
They'll feed you bread and water——"

[*BREAKS OFF* as *JULIE* exits.]

And when it's done, do we start right off for America?

Ficsur. No.

Liliom. What then?

Ficsur. We bury the money for six months. That's the usual time. And after the sixth month we dig it up again.

Liliom. And then?

Ficsur. Then you go on living just as usual for six months more—you don't touch a heller of the money.

Liliom. In six months the baby will be born.

Ficsur. Then we'll take the baby with us, too. Three months before the time you'll go to work so as to be able to say you saved up your wages to get to America.

Liliom. Which of us goes up and talks to him?

Ficsur. One of us talks to him with his mouth and the other talks with his knife. Depends on which you'd rather do. I'll tell you what—you talk to him with your mouth.

Liliom. Do you hear that?

Ficsur. What?

Liliom. Outside . . . like the rattle of swords. [*FICSUR* listens. After a pause, *LILIOM* continues.] What do I say to him?

Ficsur. You say good evening to him and: "Excuse me, sir; can you tell me the time?"

Liliom. And then what?

Ficsur. By that time I'll have stuck him—and then you take your knife——

[He stops as a *POLICEMAN* enters at back.]

Policeman. Good-day!

Ficsur, Liliom. [In unison.] Good-day!

Ficsur. [Calling toward the kitchen.] Hey, photographer, come out. . . . Here's a customer.

[There is a pause. The *POLICEMAN* waits. *FICSUR* sings softly.]

And when you're in the prison cell

They'll feed you bread and water

They'll make your little sweetheart tell

Liliom, Ficsur. [Sing together, low.]

Them all the things you brought her.
Look out here comes the—

[*They hum the rest so as not to let the POLICEMAN hear the words "the damn police." As they sing, MRS. HOLLUNDER and her son enter.*]

Policeman. Do you make cabinet photographs?

Young Hollunder. Certainly, sir. [*Points to a rack of photographs on the wall.*] Take your choice, sir. Would you like one full length?

Policeman. Yes, full length.

[*MOTHER HOLLUNDER pushes out the camera while her son poses the POLICEMAN, runs from him to camera and back again, now altering the pose, now ducking under the black cloth and pushing the camera nearer. Meanwhile MOTHER HOLLUNDER has fetched a plate from the dark-room and thrust it in the camera. While this is going on, LILIOM and FICSUR, their heads together, speak in very low tones.*]

Liliom. Belong around here?

Ficsur. Not around here.

Liliom. Where, then?

Ficsur. Suburban. [*There is a pause.*]

Liliom. [*Bursts out suddenly in a rather grotesquely childish and overstrained lament.*] O God, what a dirty life I'm leading—God, God!

Ficsur. [*Reassuring him benevolently.*] Over in America it will be better, all right.

Liliom. What's over there?

Ficsur. [*Virtuously.*] Factories . . . industries—

Young Hollunder. [*To the POLICEMAN.*] Now, quite still, please. One, two, three. [*Defly removes the cover of the lens and in a few seconds restores it.*] Thank you.

Mother Hollunder. The picture will be ready in five minutes.

Policeman. Good. I'll come back in five minutes. How much do I owe you?

Young Hollunder. [*With exaggerated deference.*] You don't need to pay in advance, Mr. Commissioner.

[*The POLICEMAN salutes condescendingly and goes out at back. MOTHER HOLLUNDER carries the*

plate into the dark-room. YOUNG HOLLUNDER, after pushing the camera back in place, follows her.]

Mother Hollunder. [*Muttering angrily as she passes FICSUR and LILIOM.*] You hang around and dirty the whole place up! Why don't you go take a walk? Things are going so well with you that you have to sing, eh? [*Confronting FICSUR suddenly.*] Weren't you frightened sick when you saw the policeman?

Ficsur. [*With loathing.*] Go 'way, or I'll step on you. [*She goes out into the dark-room.*]

Liliom. They like Hollinger at the carousel?

Ficsur. I should say they do.

Liliom. Did you see the Muskat woman, too?

Ficsur. Sure. She takes care of Hollinger's hair.

Liliom. Combs his hair?

Ficsur. She fixes him all up.

Liliom. Let her fix him all she likes.

Ficsur. [*Urging him toward the kitchen door.*] Go on. Now's your chance.

Liliom. What for?

Ficsur. To get the knife.

Liliom. What knife?

Ficsur. The kitchen knife. I've got a pocket-knife, but if he shows fight, we'll let him have the big knife.

Liliom. What for? If he gets ugly, I'll bat him one over the head that'll make him squint for the rest of his life.

Ficsur. You've got to have something on you. You can't slit his throat with a bat over the head.

Liliom. Must his throat be slit?

Ficsur. No, it *mustn't*. But if he asks for it. [*There is a pause.*] You'd like to sail on the big steamer, wouldn't you? And you want to see the factories over there, don't you? But you're not willing to inconvenience yourself a little for them.

Liliom. If I take the knife, Julie will see me.

Ficsur. Take it so she won't see you.

Liliom. [*Advances a few paces toward the kitchen. The POLICEMAN enters at back. LILIOM knocks on the door of the dark-room.*] Here's the policeman!

Mother Hollunder. [*Coming out.*] One minute more, please. Just a minute. [*She*

reënters the dark room. LILIAM hesitates a moment, then exits into the kitchen. The POLICEMAN scrutinizes FICSUR mockingly. FICSUR returns his stare, walks a few paces toward him, then deliberately turns his back. Suddenly he wheels around, points at the POLICEMAN and addresses him in a teasing, childish tone.] Christiana Street at the corner of Rettil!

Policeman. [Amazed, self-conscious] How do you know that?

Ficsur. I used to practice my profession in that neighborhood.

Policeman. What is your profession?

Ficsur. Professor of pianola—

[The POLICEMAN glares, aware that the man is joking with him, twirls his moustache indignantly. YOUNG HOLLUNDER comes out of the dark-room and gives him the finished pictures.]

Young Hollunder. Here you are, sir.

[The POLICEMAN examines the photographs, pays for them, starts to go, stops, glares at FICSUR and exits. When he is gone, FICSUR goes to the doorway and looks out after him. YOUNG HOLLUNDER exits. LILIAM reënters, buttoning his coat.]

Ficsur. [Turns, sees LILIAM.] What are you staring at?

Liliom. I'm not staring.

Ficsur. What then are you doing?

Liliom. I'm thinking it over.

Ficsur. [Comes very close to him.] Tell me then—what will you say to him?

Liliom. [Unsteadily.] I'll say—"Good evening—Excuse me, sir—Can you tell me the time?" And suppose he answers me, what do I say to him?

Ficsur. He won't answer you.

Liliom. Don't you think so?

Ficsur. No. [Feeling for the knife under LILIAM's coat.] Where is it? Where did you put it?

Liliom. [Stonily.] Left side.

Ficsur. That's right—over your heart. [Feels it.] Ah—there it is—there—there's the blade—quite a big fellow, isn't it—ah, here it begins to get narrower. [Reaches the tip of the knife.] And here is its eye—that's what it sees with. [JULIE enters from the kitchen, passes them slowly, watching them in silent terror, then stops.

FICSUR nudges LILIAM.] Sing, come on, sing!

Liliom. [In a quavering voice.]

Look out for the damn police.

Ficsur. [Joining in cheerily, loudly, marking time with the swaying of his body.]

Look out, look out, my pretty lad.

Liliom. —look out, my pretty lad.

[JULIE goes out at back. LILIAM's glance follows her. When she has gone, he turns to FICSUR.] At night—in my dreams—if his ghost comes back—what will I do then?

Ficsur. His ghost won't never come back.

Liliom. Why not?

Ficsur. A Jew's ghost don't come back.

Liliom. Well then—afterwards—

Ficsur. [Impatiently.] What do you mean—afterwards?

Liliom. In the next world—when I come up before the Lord God—what'll I say then?

Ficsur. The likes of you will never come up before Him.

Liliom. Why not?

Ficsur. Have you ever come up before the high court?

Liliom. No.

Ficsur. Our kind comes up before the police magistrate—and the highest we ever get is the criminal court.

Liliom. Will it be the same in the next world?

Ficsur. Just the same. We'll come up before a police magistrate, same as we did in this world.

Liliom. A police magistrate?

Ficsur. Sure. For the rich folks—the Heavenly Court. For us poor people—only a police magistrate. For the rich folks—fine music and angels. For us—

Liliom. For us?

Ficsur. For us, my son, there's only justice. In the next world there'll be lots of justice, yes, nothing but justice. And where there's justice there must be police magistrates; and where there're police magistrates, people like us get—

Liliom. [Interrupting.] Good evening. Excuse me, sir, can you tell me the time? [Lays his hand over his heart.]

Ficsur. What do you put your hand there for?

Liliom. My heart is jumping—under the knife.

Ficsur. Put it on the other side then.

[Looks out at the sky.] It's time we started—we'll walk slow—

Liliom. It's too early.

Ficsur. Come on.

[As they are about to go, JULIE appears in the doorway at back, obstructing the way.]

Julie. Where are you going with him?

Liliom. Where am I going with him?

Julie. Stay home.

Liliom. No.

Julie. Stay home. It's going to rain soon, and you'll get wet.

Ficsur. It won't rain.

Julie. How do you know?

Ficsur. I always get notice in advance.

Julie. Stay home. This evening the carpenter's coming. I've asked him to give you work.

Liliom. I'm not a carpenter.

Julie. [More and more anxious, though she tries to conceal it.] Stay home. Marie's coming with her intended to have their picture taken. She wants to introduce us to her intended husband.

Liliom. I've seen enough intended husbands—

Julie. Stay home. Marie's bringing some money, and I'll give it all to you.

Liliom. [Approaching the door.] I'm going—for a walk—with Ficsur. We'll be right back.

Julie. [Forcing a smile to keep back her tears.] If you stay home, I'll get you a glass of beer—or wine, if you prefer.

Ficsur. Coming or not?

Julie. I'm not angry with you any more for hitting me.

Liliom. [Gruffly, but his gruffness is simulated to hide the fact that he cannot bear the sight of her suffering.] Stand out of the way—or I'll— [He clenches his fist.] Let me out!

Julie. [Trembling.] What have you got under your coat?

Liliom. [Produces from his pocket a greasy pack of cards.] Cards.

Julie. [Trembling, speaks very low.] What's under your coat?

Liliom. Let me out!

Julie. [Obstructing the way. Speaks quickly, eagerly, in a last effort to detain him.] Marie's intended knows about a place for a married couple without children to be caretakers of a house on Arader

Street. Rent free, a kitchen of your own, and the privilege of keeping chickens—

Liliom. Get out of the way!

[JULIE stands aside. LILIOM goes out. FICSUR follows him. JULIE remains standing meditatively in the doorway. MOTHER HOLLUNDER comes out of the kitchen.]

Mother Hollunder. I can't find my kitchen knife anywhere. Have you seen anything of it?

Julie. [Horried.] No.

Mother Hollunder. It was on the kitchen table just a few minutes ago. No one was in there except Liliom.

Julie. He didn't take it.

Mother Hollunder. No one else was in there.

Julie. What would Liliom want with a kitchen knife?

Mother Hollunder. He'd sell it and spend the money on drink.

Julie. It just so happens—see how unjust you are to him—it just so happens that I went through all of Liliom's pockets just now—I wanted to see if he had any money on him. But he had nothing but a pack of cards.

Mother Hollunder. [Returns to the kitchen, grumbling.] Cards in his pocket—cards! The fine gentlemen have evidently gone off to their club to play a little game.

[She goes out. After a pause MARIE, happy and beaming, appears in the doorway at back, and enters, followed by WOLF.]

Marie. Here we are! [She takes WOLF by the hand and leads him, grinning shyly, to JULIE, who has turned at her call.] Hello!

Julie. Hello.

Marie. Well, we're here.

Julie. Yes.

Wolf. [Bows awkwardly and extends his hand.] My name is Wolf Beifeld.

Julie. My name is Julie Zeller.

[They shake hands. There is an embarrassed silence. Then, to relieve the situation, WOLF takes JULIE's hand again and shakes it vigorously.]

Marie. Well—this is Wolf.

Wolf. Yes.

Julie. Yes. [Another awkward silence.]

Marie. Where is Liliom?

Wolf. Yes, where is your husband?

Julie. He's out.

Marie. Where?

Julie. Just for a walk.

Marie. Is he?

Julie. Yes.

Wolf. Oh! [Another silence.]

Marie. Wolf's got a new place. After the first of the month he won't have to stand outside any more. He's going to work in a club after the first of the month.

Wolf. [Apologetically.] She don't know yet how to explain these things just right—hehehe— Beginning the first I'm to be second steward at the Burger Club—a good job, if one conducts oneself properly.

Julie. Yes?

Wolf. The pay—is quite good—but the main thing is the tips. When they play cards there's always a bit for the steward. The tips, I may say, amount to twenty, even thirty kronen every night.

Marie. Yes.

Wolf. We've rented two rooms for ourselves to start with—and if things go well—

Marie. Then we'll buy a house in the country.

Wolf. If one only tends to business and keeps honest. Of course, in the country we'll miss the city life, but if the good Lord sends us children—it's much healthier for children in the country.

[There is a brief pause.]

Marie. Wolf's nice looking, isn't he?

Julie. Yes.

Marie. And he's a good boy, Wolf.

Julie. Yes.

Marie. The only thing is—he's a Jew.

Julie. Oh, well, you can get used to that.

Marie. Well, aren't you going to wish us luck?

Julie. Of course I do. [She embraces MARIE.]

Marie. And aren't you going to kiss Wolf, too?

Julie. Him, too. [She embraces WOLF, remains quite still a moment, her head resting on his shoulder.]

Wolf. Why are you crying, my dear Mrs.— [He looks questionably at MARIE over JULIE's shoulder.]

Marie. Because she has such a good heart. [She becomes sentimental, too.]

Wolf. [Touched.] We thank you for your heartfelt sympathy—

[He cannot restrain his own tears.

There is a pause before MOTHER

HOLLUNDER and her son enter.

YOUNG HOLLUNDER immediately busies himself with the camera.]

Mother Hollunder. Now if you don't mind, we'll do it right away, before it gets too dark. [She leads MARIE and WOLF into position before the background-screen. Here they immediately fall into an awkward pose, smiling mechanically.] Full length?

Marie. Please. Both figures full length.

Mother Hollunder. Bride and groom?

Marie. Yes.

Mother Hollunder, Young Hollunder. [Speak in unison, in loud professionally-expressionless tones.] The lady looks at the gentleman and the gentleman looks straight into the camera.

Mother Hollunder. [Poses first MARIE, then WOLF.] Now, if you please.

Young Hollunder. [Who has crept under the black cloth, calls in muffled tones.] That's good—that's very good!

Marie. [Stonily rigid, but very happy, trying to speak without altering her expression.] Julie, dear, do we look all right?

Julie. Yes, dear.

Young Hollunder. Now, if you please, hold still. I'll count up to three and then you must hold perfectly still. [Grasps the cover of the lens and calls threateningly.] One—two—three!

[He removes the cover; there is utter silence. But as he speaks the word "one" there is heard, very faintly in the distance, the refrain of the thieves' song which FICUR and LILIOM have been singing. The refrain continues until the fall of the curtain. As he speaks the word "three" everybody is perfectly rigid save JULIE, who lets her head sink slowly to the table. The distant refrain dies out.]

SCENE FOUR

SCENE—In the fields on the outskirts of the city. At back a railroad embankment crosses the stage obliquely. At center of the embankment stands a red and white signal flag, and near it a little red signal lamp which is not yet lighted. Here also

a wooden stairway leads up to the embankment.

At the foot of the embankment to the right is a pile of used railroad ties. In the background a telegraph pole, beyond it a view of trees, fences and fields; still further back a factory building and a cluster of little dwellings.

It is six o'clock of the same afternoon. Dusk has begun to fall.

LILIOM and FICSUR are discovered on the stairway looking after the train which has just passed.

Liliom. Can you still hear it snort?

Ficsur. Listen!

[They watch the vanishing train.]

Liliom. If you put your ear on the tracks you can hear it go all the way to Vienna.

Ficsur. Huh!

Liliom. The one that just puffed past us—it goes all the way to Vienna.

Ficsur. No further?

Liliom. Yes—further, too.

[There is a pause.]

Ficsur. It must be near six. [As LILIOM ascends the steps.] Where are you going?

Liliom. Don't be afraid. I'm not giving you the slip.

Ficsur. Why should you give me the slip? That cashier has sixteen thousand kronen on him. Just be patient till he comes, then you can talk to him, nice and polite.

Liliom. I say, "Good evening—excuse me, sir; what time is it?"

Ficsur. Then he tells you what time it is.

Liliom. Suppose he don't come?

Ficsur. [Coming down the steps.] Nonsense! He's got to come. He pays off the workmen every Saturday. And this is Saturday, ain't it? [LILIOM has ascended to the top of the stairway and is gazing along the tracks.] What are you looking at up there?

Liliom. The tracks go on and on—there's no end to them.

Ficsur. What's that to stare about?

Liliom. Nothing—only I always look after the train. When you stand down there at night it snorts past you, and spits down.

Ficsur. Spits?

Liliom. Yes, the engine. It spits down. And then the whole train rattles past and

away—and you stand there—spat on—but it draws your eyes along with it.

Ficsur. Draws your eyes along?

Liliom. Yes—whether you want to or not, you've got to look after it—as long as the tiniest bit of it is in sight.

Ficsur. Swell people sit in it.

Liliom. And read newspapers.

Ficsur. And smoke cigars.

Liliom. And inhale the smoke.

[There is a short silence.]

Ficsur. Is he coming?

Liliom. Not yet. [Silence again. LILIOM comes down, speaks low, confidentially.] Do you hear the telegraph wires?

Ficsur. I hear them when the wind blows.

Liliom. Even when the wind doesn't blow you can hear them humming, humming— People talk through them.

Ficsur. Who?

Liliom. Jews.

Ficsur. No—they telegraph.

Liliom. They talk through them and from some other place they get answered. And it all goes through the iron strings—that's why they hum like that—they-hum—

Ficsur. What do they hum?

Liliom. They hum! ninety-nine, ninety-nine. Just listen.

Ficsur. What for?

Liliom. That sparrow's listening, too. He's cocked one eye and looks at me as if to say: "I'd like to know what they're talking about."

Ficsur. You're looking at a bird?

Liliom. He's looking at me, too.

Ficsur. Listen, you're sick! There's something the matter with you. Do you know what it is? Money. That bird has no money, either; that's why he cocks his eye.

Liliom. Maybe.

Ficsur. Whoever has money don't cock his eye.

Liliom. What then does he do?

Ficsur. He does anything he wants. But nobody works unless he has money. We'll soon have money ourselves.

Liliom. I say, "Good evening. Excuse me, sir, can you tell me what time it is!"

Ficsur. He's not coming yet. Got the cards? [LILIOM gives him the pack of cards.] Got any money?

Liliom. [Takes some coins from his trousers pocket and counts.] Eleven.

Ficsur. [*Sits astride on the pile of ties and looks off left.*] All right—eleven.

Liliom. [*Sitting astride on the ties facing him.*] Put it up.

Ficsur. [*Puts the money on the ties; rapidly shuffles the cards.*] We'll play twenty-one. I'll bank. [*He deals deftly.*]

Liliom. [*Looks at his card.*] Good. I'll bet the bank.

Ficsur. Must have an ace! [*Deals him a second card.*]

Liliom. Another one. [*He gets another card.*] Another. [*Gets still another.*] Over! [*Throws down his cards. FICSUR gathers in the money.*] Come on!

Ficsur. Come on what? Got no more money, have you?

Liliom. No.

Ficsur. Then the game's over—unless you want to—

Liliom. What?

Ficsur. Play on credit.

Liliom. You'll trust me?

Ficsur. No—but—I'll deduct it.

Liliom. Deduct it from what?

Ficsur. From your share of the money. If you win you deduct from my share.

Liliom. [*Looks over his shoulder to see if the cashier is coming; nervous and ashamed.*] All right. How much is bank?

Ficsur. That cashier is bringing us sixteen thousand kronen. Eight thousand of that is mine. Well, then, the bank is eight thousand.

Liliom. Good.

Ficsur. Whoever has the most luck will have the most money. [*He deals.*]

Liliom. Six hundred kronen. [*FICSUR gives him another card.*] Enough.

Ficsur. [*Laying out his own cards.*] Twenty-one. [*He shuffles rapidly.*]

Liliom. [*Moves excitedly nearer to FICSUR.*] Well, then, double or nothing.

Ficsur. [*Dealing.*] Double or nothing.

Liliom. [*Gets a card.*] Enough.

Ficsur. [*Laying out his own cards.*] Twenty-one. [*Shuffles rapidly again.*]

Liliom. [*In alarm.*] You're not—cheating?

Ficsur. Me? Do I look like a cheat? [*Deals the cards again.*]

Liliom. [*Glances nervously over his shoulder.*] A thousand.

Ficsur. [*Nonchalantly.*] Kronen?

Liliom. Kronen. [*He gets a card.*] An-

other one. [*Gets another card.*] Over again! [*Like an inexperienced gambler who is losing heavily, LILIOM is very nervous. He plays dazedly, wildly, irrationally. From now on it is apparent that his only thought is to win his money back.*]

Ficsur. That makes twelve hundred you owe.

Liliom. Double or nothing. [*He gets a card. He is greatly excited.*] Another one. [*Gets another card.*] Another. [*Throws down three cards.*]

Ficsur. [*Bends over and adds up the sum on the ground.*] Ten—fourteen—twenty-three— You owe two thousand, four hundred.

Liliom. Now what?

Ficsur. [*Takes a card out of the deck and gives it to him.*] Here's the red ace. You can play double or nothing again.

Liliom. [*Eagerly.*] Good. [*Gets another card.*] Enough.

Ficsur. [*Turns up his own cards.*] Nineteen.

Liliom. You win again. [*Almost imploring.*] Give me an ace again. Give me the green one. [*Takes a card.*] Double or nothing.

Ficsur. Not any more.

Liliom. Why not?

Ficsur. Because if you lose you won't be able to pay. Double would be nine thousand six hundred. And you've only got eight thousand altogether.

Liliom. [*Greatly excited.*] That—that—I call that a dirty trick!

Ficsur. Three thousand, two hundred. That's all you can put up.

Liliom. [*Eagerly.*] All right, then—three thousand, two hundred. [*FICSUR deals him a card.*] Enough.

Ficsur. I've got an ace myself. Now we'll have to take our time and squeeze 'em. [*LILIOM pushes closer to him as he takes up his cards and slowly, intently unfolds them.*] Twenty-one. [*He quickly puts the cards in his pocket. There is a pause.*]

Liliom. Now—now—I'll tell you now—you're a crook, a low-down—

[*Now LINZMAN enters at right. He is a strong, robust, red-bearded Jew about 40 years of age. At his side he carries a leather bag slung by a strap from his shoulder. FICSUR coughs warningly.*]

moves to the right between LINZMAN and the embankment, pauses just behind LINZMAN and follows him. LILIOM stands bewildered a few paces to the left of the railroad ties. He finds himself facing LINZMAN.]

Liliom. [Trembling in every limb.] Good evening. Excuse me, sir, can you tell me the time?

[FICSUR springs silently at LINZMAN, the little knife in his right hand. But LINZMAN catches FICSUR's right hand with his own left and forces FICSUR to his knees. Simultaneously LINZMAN thrusts his right hand into his coat pocket and produces a revolver which he points at LILIOM's breast. LILIOM is standing two paces away from the revolver. There is a long pause.]

Linzman. [In a low, even voice.] It is twenty-five minutes past six. [Pauses, looks ironically down at FICSUR.] It's lucky I grabbed the hand with the knife instead of the other one. [Pauses again, looks approvingly from one to the other.] Two fine birds! [To FICSUR.] I should live so—Rothschild has more luck than you. [To LILIOM.] I'd advise you to keep nice and quiet. If you make one move, you'll get two bullets in you. Just look into the barrel. You'll see some little things in there made of lead.

Ficsur. Let me go. I didn't do anything.

Linzman. [Mockingly shakes the hand which still holds the knife.] And this? What do you call this? Oh, yes, I know. You thought I had an apple in my pocket, and you wanted to peel it. That's it. Forgive me for my error. I beg your pardon, sir.

Liliom. But I—I—

Linzman. Yes, my son, I know. It's so simple. You only asked what time it is. Well, it's twenty-five minutes after six.

Ficsur. Let us go, honorable sir. We didn't do anything to you.

Linzman. In the first place, my son, I'm not an honorable sir. In the second place, for the same money, you could have said Your Excellency. But in the third place you'll find it very hard to beg off by flattering me.

Liliom. But I—I really didn't do anything to you.

Linzman. Look behind you, my boy. Don't be afraid. Look behind you, but don't run away or I'll have to shoot you down. [LILIOM turns his head slowly around.] Who's coming up there?

Liliom. [Looking at LINZMAN.] Policemen.

Linzman. [To FICSUR.] You hold still, or—— [To LILIOM teasingly.] How many policemen are there?

Liliom. [His eyes cast down.] Two.

Linzman. And what are the policemen sitting on?

Liliom. Horses.

Linzman. And which can run faster, a horse or a man?

Liliom. A horse.

Linzman. There, you see. It would be hard to get away now. [Laughs.] I never saw such an unlucky pair of highway robbers. I can't imagine worse luck. Just today I had to put a pistol in my pocket. And even if I hadn't—old Linzman is a match for four like you. But even that isn't all. Did you happen to notice, you oxen, what direction I came from? From the factory, didn't I? When I went there I had a nice bit of money with me. Sixteen thousand crowns! But now—not a heller. [Calls off left.] Hey, come quicker, will you? This fellow is pulling pretty strong. [FICSUR frees himself with a mighty wrench and darts rapidly off. As LINZMAN aims his pistol at the vanishing FICSUR, LILIOM runs up the steps to the embankment. LINZMAN hesitates, perceives that LILIOM is the better target, points the pistol at him.] Stop, or I'll shoot! [Calls off left to the POLICEMEN.] Why don't you come down off your horses? [His pistol is leveled at LILIOM, who stands on the embankment, facing the audience. From the left on the embankment, a POLICEMAN appears, revolver in hand.]

First Policeman. Stop!

Linzman. Well, my boy, do you still want to know what time it is? From ten to twelve years in prison!

Liliom. You won't get me! [LINZMAN laughs derisively. LILIOM is now three or four paces from the POLICEMAN and equally distant from LINZMAN. His face is uplifted to the sky. He bursts into laughter, half

defiant, half self-pitying, and takes the kitchen knife from under his coat.] Julie! —[The ring of farewell is in the word. He turns sideways, thrusts the knife deep in his breast, sways, falls and rolls down the far side of the embankment. There is a long pause. From the left up on the embankment come the Two POLICEMEN.]

Linzman. What's the matter? [The FIRST POLICEMAN comes along the embankment as far as the steps, looks down in the opposite side, then climbs down at about the spot where LILIAM disappeared. LINZMAN and the other POLICEMAN mount the embankment and look down on him.] Stabbed himself?

Voice of First Policeman. Yes—and he seems to have made a thorough job of it.

Linzman. [Excitedly to the SECOND POLICEMAN.] I'll go and telephone to the hospital. [He runs down the steps and goes out at left.]

Second Policeman. Go to Eisler's grocery store and telephone to the factory from there. They've a doctor there, too. [Calling down to the other POLICEMAN.] I'm going to tie up the horses. [Comes down the steps and exits at left. The stage is empty. There is a pause. The little red signal lamp is lit.]

Voice of First Policeman. Hey, Stephan!

Voice of Second Policeman. What?

Voice of First Policeman. Shall I pull the knife out of his chest?

Voice of Second Policeman. Better not, or he may bleed to death. [There is a pause.]

Voice of First Policeman. Stephan!

Voice of Second Policeman. Yes.

Voice of First Policeman. Lot of mosquito-toes around here.

Voice of Second Policeman. Yes.

Voice of First Policeman. Got a cigar?

Voice of Second Policeman. No. [There is a pause. The FIRST POLICEMAN appears over the opposite side of the embankment.]

First Policeman. A lot of good the new pay-schedule's done us—made things worse than they used to be—we get more but we have less than we ever had. If the Government could be made to realize that. It's a thankless job at best. You work hard year after year, you get gray in the service, and slowly you die—yes.

Second Policeman. That's right.

First Policeman. Yes. [In the distance is heard the bell of the signal tower.]

SCENE FIVE

SCENE—The photographic "studio" a half hour later that same evening. MOTHER HOLLUNDER, her son, MARIE and WOLF stand in a group back right, their heads together. JULIE stands apart from them, a few paces to the left.

Young Hollunder. [Who has just come in, tells his story excitedly.] They're bringing him now. Two workmen from the factory are carrying him on a stretcher.

Wolf. Where is the doctor?

Young Hollunder. A policeman telephoned to headquarters. The police-surgeon ought to be here any minute.

Marie. Maybe they'll pull him through after all.

Young Hollunder. He stabbed himself too deep in his chest. But he's still breathing. He can still talk, too, but very faintly. At first he lay there unconscious, but when they put him on the stretcher he came to.

Wolf. That was from the shaking.

Marie. We'd better make room. [They make room. Two workmen carry in LILIAM on a stretcher which has four legs and stands about as high as a bed. They put the stretcher at left directly in front of the sofa, so that the head is at right and the foot at left. Then they unobtrusively join the group at the door. Later, they go out. JULIE is standing at the side of the stretcher, where, without moving, she can see LILIAM's face. The others crowd emotionally together near the door. THE FIRST POLICEMAN enters.]

First Policeman. Are you his wife?

Julie. Yes.

First Policeman. The doctor at the factory who bandaged him up forbade us to take him to the hospital.—Dangerous to move him that far. What he needs now is rest. Just let him be until the police-surgeon comes. [To the group near the door.] He's not to be disturbed. [They make way for him. He exits. There is a pause.]

Wolf. [Gently urging the others out.] Please—it's best if we all get out of here. We'll only be in the way.

Marie. [To JULIE.] Julie, what do you

think? [JULIE looks at her without answering.] Julie, can I do anything to help? [JULIE does not answer.] We'll be just outside on the bench if you want us. [MOTHER HOLLUNDER and her son have gone out when first requested. Now MARIE and WOLF exit, too. JULIE sits on the edge of the stretcher and looks at LILIOM. He stretches his hand out to her. She clasps it. It is not quite dark yet. Both of them can still be plainly seen.]

Liliom. [Raises himself with difficulty; speaks lightly at first, but later soberly, defiantly.] Little—Julie—there's something—I want to tell you—like when you go to a restaurant—and you've finished eating—and it's time—to pay—then you have to count up everything—everything you owe—well—I beat you—not because I was mad at you—no—only because I can't bear to see anyone crying. You always cried—on my account—and, well, you see, I never learned a trade—what kind of a caretaker would I make? But anyhow—I wasn't going back to the carousel to fool with the girls. No, I spit on them all—understand?

Julie. Yes.

Liliom. And—as for Hollinger—he's good enough—Mrs. Muskat can get along all right with him. The jokes he tells are mine—and the people laugh when he tells them—but I don't care.—I didn't give you anything—no home—not even the food you ate—but you don't understand.—It's true I'm not much good—but I couldn't be a caretaker—and so I thought maybe it would be better over there—in America—do you see?

Julie. Yes.

Liliom. I'm not asking—forgiveness—I don't do that—I don't. Tell the baby—if you like.

Julie. Yes.

Liliom. Tell the baby—I wasn't much good—but tell him—if you ever talk about me—tell him—I thought—perhaps—over in America—but that's no affair of yours. I'm not asking forgiveness. For my part the police can come now.—If it's a boy—if it's a girl.—Perhaps I'll see the Lord God today.—Do you think I'll see Him?

Julie. Yes.

Liliom. I'm not afraid—of the police Up There—if they'll only let me come up in front of the Lord God Himself—not like

down here where an officer stops you at the door. If the carpenter asks you—yes—be his wife—marry him. And the child—tell him he's his father.—He'll believe you—won't he?

Julie. Yes.

Liliom. When I beat you—I was right.—You mustn't always think—you mustn't always be right.—Liliom can be right once, too.—It's all the same to me who was right.—It's so dumb. Nobody's right—but they all think they are right.—A lot they know!

Julie. Yes.

Liliom. Julie—come—hold my hand tight.

Julie. I'm holding it tight—all the time.

Liliom. Tighter, still tighter—I'm going

— [Pauses.] Julie—

Julie. Good-bye. [LILIOM sinks slowly back and dies. JULIE frees her hand. The DOCTOR enters with the FIRST POLICEMAN.]

Doctor. Good evening. His wife?

Julie. Yes, sir. [Behind the DOCTOR and POLICEMAN enter MARIE, WOLF, MOTHER HOLLUNDER, YOUNG HOLLUNDER and MRS. MUSKAT. They remain respectfully at the doorway. The DOCTOR bends over LILIOM and examines him.]

Doctor. A light, if you please. [JULIE fetches a burning candle from the dark room. The DOCTOR examines LILIOM briefly in the candle-light, then turns suddenly away.] Have you pen and ink?

Wolf. [Proffering a pen.] A fountain-pen—American—

Doctor. [Takes a printed form from his pocket; speaks as he writes out the death-certificate at the little table.] My poor woman, your husband is dead—there's nothing to be done for him—the good God will help him now—I'll leave this certificate with you. You will give it to the people from the hospital when they come—I'll arrange for the body to be removed at once. [Rises.] Please give me a towel and soap.

Policeman. I've got them for you out here, sir. [Points to door at back.]

Doctor. God be with you, my good woman.

Julie. Thank you, sir. [The DOCTOR and POLICEMAN exit. The others slowly draw nearer.]

Marie. Poor Julie. May he rest in peace, poor man, but as for you—please don't be

angry with me for saying it—but you're better off this way.

Mother Hollunder. He is better off, the poor fellow, and so are you.

Marie. Much better, Julie . . . you are young . . . and one of these days some good man will come along. Am I right?

Wolf. She's right.

Marie. Julie, tell me, am I right?

Julie. You are right, dear; you are very good.

Young Hollunder. There's a good man—the carpenter. Oh, I can speak of it now. He comes here every day on some excuse or other—and he never fails to ask for you.

Marie. A widower—with two children.

Mother Hollunder. He's better off, poor fellow—and so are you. He was a bad man.

Marie. He wasn't good-hearted. Was he, Wolf?

Wolf. No, I must say, he really wasn't. No, Liliom wasn't a good man. A good man doesn't strike a woman.

Marie. Am I right? Tell me, Julie, am I right?

Julie. You are right, dear.

Young Hollunder. It's really a good thing for her it happened.

Mother Hollunder. He's better off—and so is she.

Wolf. Now you have your freedom again. How old are you?

Julie. Eighteen.

Wolf. Eighteen. A mere child! Am I right?

Julie. You are right, Wolf. You are kind.

Young Hollunder. Lucky for you it happened, isn't it?

Julie. Yes.

Young Hollunder. All you had before was bad luck. If it weren't for my mother you wouldn't have had a roof over your head or a bite to eat—and now Autumn's coming and Winter. You couldn't have lived in this shack in the Winter time, could you?

Marie. Certainly not! You'd have frozen like the birds in the fields. Am I right, Julie?

Julie. Yes, Marie.

Marie. A year from now you will have forgotten all about him, won't you?

Julie. You are right, Marie.

Wolf. If you need anything, count on us.

We'll go now. But tomorrow morning we'll be back. Come, Marie. God be with you. [*Offers JULIE his hand.*]

Julie. God be with you.

Marie. [*Embraces JULIE, weeping.*] It's the best thing that could have happened to you, Julie, the best thing.

Julie. Don't cry, Marie. [*MARIE and WOLF exit.*]

Mother Hollunder. I'll make a little black coffee. You haven't had a thing to eat today. Then you'll come home with us. [*MOTHER HOLLUNDER and her son exit. MRS. MUSKAT comes over to JULIE.*]

Mrs. Muskat. Would you mind if I—looked at him?

Julie. He used to work for you.

Mrs. Muskat. [*Contemplates the body; turns to JULIE.*] Won't you make up with me?

Julie. I wasn't angry with you.

Mrs. Muskat. But you were. Let's make it up.

Julie. [*Raising her voice eagerly, almost triumphantly.*] I've nothing to make up with you.

Mrs. Muskat. But I have with you. Everyone says hard things against the poor dead boy—except us two. You don't say he was bad.

Julie. [*Raising her voice yet higher, this time on a defiant, wholly triumphant note.*] Yes, I do.

Mrs. Muskat. I understand, my child. But he beat me, too. What does that matter? I've forgotten it.

Julie. [*From now on answers her coldly, drily, without looking at her.*] That's your own affair.

Mrs. Muskat. If I can help you in any way—

Julie. There's nothing I need.

Mrs. Muskat. I still owe him two kronen, back pay.

Julie. You should have paid him.

Mrs. Muskat. Now that the poor fellow is dead I thought perhaps it would be the same if I paid you.

Julie. I've nothing to do with it.

Mrs. Muskat. All right. Please don't think I'm trying to force myself on you. I stayed because we two are the only ones on earth who loved him. That's why I thought we ought to stick together.

Julie. No, thank you.

Mrs. Muskat. Then you couldn't have loved him as I did.

Julie. No.

Mrs. Muskat. I loved him better.

Julie. Yes.

Mrs. Muskat. Good-bye.

Julie. Good-bye. [MRS. MUSKAT exits. JULIE puts the candle on the table near LILIOM's head, sits on the edge of the stretcher, looks into the dead man's face and caresses it tenderly.] Sleep, Liliom, sleep—it's no business of hers—I never even told you—but now I'll tell you—now I'll tell you—you bad, quick-tempered, rough, unhappy, wicked—dear boy—sleep peacefully, Liliom—they can't understand how I feel—I can't even explain to you—not even to you—how I feel—you'd only laugh at me—but you can't hear me any more. [Between tender motherliness and reproach, yet with great love in her voice.] It was wicked of you to beat me—on the breast and on the head and face—but you're gone now.—You treated me badly—that was wicked of you—but sleep peacefully, Liliom—you bad, bad boy, you—I love you—I never told you before—I was ashamed—but now I've told you—I love you. Liliom—sleep—my boy—sleep. [She rises, gets a Bible, sits down near the candle and reads softly to herself, so that, not the words, but an inarticulate murmur is heard. The CARPENTER enters at back.]

Carpenter. [Stands near the door; in the dimness of the room he can scarcely be seen.] Miss Julie—

Julie. [Without alarm.] Who is that?

Carpenter. [Very slowly.] The carpenter.

Julie. What does the carpenter want?

Carpenter. Can I be of help to you in any way? Shall I stay here with you?

Julie. [Gratefully, but firmly.] Don't stay, carpenter.

Carpenter. Shall I come back tomorrow?

Julie. Not tomorrow, either.

Carpenter. Don't be offended, Miss Julie, but I'd like to know—you see, I'm not a young man any more—I have two children—and if I'm to come back any more—I'd like to know—if there's any use—

Julie. No use, carpenter.

Carpenter. [As he exits.] God be with you. [JULIE resumes her reading. FICSUR enters, slinks furtively sideways to the stretcher, looks at LILIOM, shakes his head.

JULIE looks up from her reading. FICSUR takes fright, slinks away from the stretcher, sits down at right, biting his nails. JULIE rises. FICSUR rises, too, and looks at her half fearfully. With her piercing glance upon him he slinks to the doorway at back, where he pauses and speaks.]

Ficsur. The old woman asked me to tell you that coffee is ready, and you are to come in. [JULIE goes to the kitchen door. FICSUR withdraws until she has closed the door behind her. Then he reappears in the doorway, stands on tiptoes, looks at LILIOM, then exits. Now the body lies alone. After a brief silence music is heard, distant at first, but gradually coming nearer. It is very much like the music of the carousel, but slower, graver, more exalted. The melody, too, is the same, yet the tempo is altered and contrapuntal measures of the thieves' song are intertwined in it. Two men in black, with heavy sticks, soft black hats and black gloves, appear in the doorway at back and stride slowly into the room. Their faces are beardless, marble white, grave and benign. One stops in front of the stretcher, the other a pace to the right. From above a dim violet light illuminates their faces.]

The First. [To LILIOM.] Rise and come with us.

The Second. [Politely.] You're under arrest.

The First. [Somewhat louder, but always in a gentle, low, resonant voice.] Do you hear? Rise. Don't you hear?

The Second. We are the police.

The First. [Bends down, touches LILIOM's shoulder.] Get up and come with us. [LILIOM slowly sits up.]

The Second. Come along.

The First. [Paternaly.] These people suppose that when they die all their difficulties are solved for them.

The Second. [Raising his voice sternly.] That simply by thrusting a knife in your heart and making it stop beating you can leave your wife behind with a child in her womb—

The First. It is not as simple as that.

The Second. Such things are not settled so easily.

The First. Come along. You will have to give an account of yourself. [As both bow their heads, he continues softly.] We are

God's police. [*An expression of glad relief lights upon LILLOM's face. He rises from the stretcher.*] Come.

The Second. You mortals don't get off quite as easy as that.

The First. [*Softly.*] Come. [*LILLOM starts to walk ahead of them, then stops and looks at them.*] The end is not as abrupt as that. Your name is still spoken. Your face is still remembered. And what you said, and what you did, and what you failed to do—these are still remembered. Remembered, too, are the manner of your glance, the ring of your voice, the clasp of your hand and how your step sounded—as long as one is left who remembers you, so long is the matter unended. Before the end there is much to be undone. Until you are quite forgotten, my son, you will not be finished with the earth—even though you are dead.

The Second. [*Very gently.*] Come. [*The music begins again. All three exit at back, LILLOM leading, the others following. The stage is empty and quite dark save for the candle which burns by the stretcher, on which, in the shadows, the covers are so arranged that one cannot quite be sure that a body is not still lying. The music dies out in the distance as if it had followed LILLOM and the two POLICEMEN. The candle flickers and goes out. There is a brief interval of silence and total darkness before.*]

SCENE SIX

SCENE—In the Beyond. A whitewashed courtroom. There is a green-topped table; behind it a bench. Back center is a door with a bell over it. Next to this door is a window through which can be seen a vista of rose-tinted clouds.

Down right there is a grated iron door. Down left another door.

Two men are on the bench when the curtain rises. One is richly, the other poorly dressed.

From a great distance is heard a fanfare of trumpets playing the refrain of the thieves' song in slow, altered tempo.

Passing the window at back appear LILLOM and the two POLICEMEN. The bell rings.

An old guard enters at right. He is bald

and has a long white beard. He wears the conventional police uniform.

He goes to the door at back, opens it, exchanges silent greetings with the two policemen and closes the door again.

LILLOM looks wonderingly around.

The First. [*To the old guard.*] Announce us. [*The guard exits at left.*]

Lilom. Is this it?

The Second. Yes, my son.

Lilom. This is the police court?

The Second. Yes, my son. The part for suicide cases.

Lilom. What happens here?

The First. Here justice is done. Sit down. [*LILLOM sits next to the two men. The two POLICEMEN stand silent near the table.*]

The Richly Dressed Man. [*Whispers.*] Suicide, too?

Lilom. Yes.

The Richly Dressed Man. [*Points to the POORLY DRESSED MAN.*] So's he. [*Introducing himself.*] My name is Reich.

The Poorly Dressed Man. [*Whispers, too.*] My name is Stephan Kadar.

[*LILLOM only looks at them.*]

The Poorly Dressed Man. And you? What's your name?

Lilom. None of your business. [*Both move a bit away from him.*]

The Poorly Dressed Man. I did it by jumping out of a window.

The Richly Dressed Man. I did it with a pistol—and you?

Lilom. With a knife. [*They move a bit further away from him.*]

The Richly Dressed Man. A pistol is cleaner.

Lilom. If I had the price of a pistol—

The Second. Silence!

[*THE POLICE MAGISTRATE enters. He has a long white beard, is bald, but only in profile can be seen on his head a single tuft of snow-white hair. THE GUARD reenters behind him and sits on the bench with the dead men. As THE MAGISTRATE enters, all rise, except LILLOM, who remains surlily seated. When THE MAGISTRATE sits down, so do the others.*]

The Guard. Yesterday's cases, your honor. The numbers are entered in the docket.

The Magistrate. Number 16,472.

The First. [*Looks in his notebook,*

beckons THE RICHLY DRESSED MAN.] Stand up, please. [THE RICHLY DRESSED MAN rises.]

The Magistrate. Your name?

The Richly Dressed Man. Doctor Reich.

The Magistrate. Age?

The Richly Dressed Man. Forty-two, married, Jew.

The Magistrate. [With a gesture of dismissal.] Religion does not interest us here—why did you kill yourself?

The Richly Dressed Man. On account of debts.

The Magistrate. What good did you do on earth?

The Richly Dressed Man. I was a lawyer

The Magistrate. [Coughs significantly.] Yes—we'll discuss that later. For the present I shall only ask you: Would you like to go back to earth once more before sunrise? I advise you that you have the right to go if you choose. Do you understand?

The Richly Dressed Man. Yes, sir.

The Magistrate. He who takes his life is apt, in his haste and his excitement, to forget something. Is there anything important down there you have left undone? Something to tell someone? Something to undo?

The Richly Dressed Man. My debts—

The Magistrate. They do not matter here. Here we are concerned only with the affairs of the soul.

The Richly Dressed Man. Then—if you please—when I left—the house—my youngest son, Oscar—was asleep. I didn't trust myself to wake him—and bid him good-bye. I would have liked—to kiss him good-bye.

The Magistrate. [To the SECOND.] You will take Dr. Reich back and let him kiss his son Oscar.

The Second. Come with me, please.

The Richly Dressed Man. [To THE MAGISTRATE.] I thank you. [He bows and exits at back with THE SECOND.]

The Magistrate. [After making an entry in the docket.] Number 16,473.

The First. [Looks in his notebook, then beckons LILIOM.] Stand up.

Liliom. You said please to him. [He rises.]

The Magistrate. Your name?

Liliom. Liliom.

The Magistrate. Isn't that your nickname?

Liliom. Yes.

The Magistrate. What is your right name?

Liliom. Andreas.

The Magistrate. And your last name?

Liliom. Zavoczki—after my mother.

The Magistrate. Your age?

Liliom. Twenty-four.

The Magistrate. What good did you do on earth? [LILIOM is silent.] Why did you take your life? [LILIOM does not answer. THE MAGISTRATE addresses THE FIRST.] Take that knife away from him. [THE FIRST does so.] It will be returned to you, if you go back to earth.

Liliom. Do I go back to earth again?

The Magistrate. Just answer my questions.

Liliom. I wasn't answering then, I was asking if—

The Magistrate. You don't ask questions here. You only answer. Only answer, Andreas Zavoczki! I ask you whether there is anything on earth you neglected to accomplish? Anything down there you would like to do?

Liliom. Yes.

The Magistrate. What is it?

Liliom. I'd like to break Ficsur's head for him.

The Magistrate. Punishment is our office. Is there nothing else on earth you'd like to do?

Liliom. I don't know—I guess, as long as I'm here, I'll not go back.

The Magistrate. [To THE FIRST.] Note that. He waives his right. [LILIOM starts back to the bench.] Stay where you are. You are aware that you left your wife without food or shelter?

Liliom. Yes.

The Magistrate. Don't you regret it?

Liliom. No.

The Magistrate. You are aware that your wife is pregnant, and that in six months a child will be born?

Liliom. I know.

The Magistrate. And that the child, too, will be without food or shelter? Do you regret that?

Liliom. As long as I won't be there, what's it got to do with me?

The Magistrate. Don't try to deceive us,

Andreas Zavoczki. We see through you as through a pane of glass.

Liliom. If you see so much, what do you want to ask me for? Why don't you let me rest—in peace?

The Magistrate. First you must earn your rest.

Liliom. I want—only—to sleep.

The Magistrate. Your obstinacy won't help you. Here patience is endless as time. We can wait.

Liliom. Can I ask something—I'd like to know—if Your Honor will tell me—whether the baby will be a boy or a girl.

The Magistrate. You shall see that for yourself.

Liliom. [Excitedly.] I'll see the baby?

The Magistrate. When you do it won't be a baby any more. But we haven't reached that question yet.

Liliom. I'll see it?

The Magistrate. Again I ask you: Do you not regret that you deserted your wife and child; that you were a bad husband, a bad father?

Liliom. A bad husband?

The Magistrate. Yes.

Liliom. And a bad father?

The Magistrate. That, too.

Liliom. I couldn't get work—and I couldn't bear to see Julie—all the time—all the time—

The Magistrate. Weeping! Why are you ashamed to say it? You couldn't bear to see her weeping. Why are you afraid of that word? And why are you ashamed that you loved her?

Liliom. [Shrugs his shoulders.] Who's ashamed? But I couldn't bear to see her—and that's why I was bad to her. You see, it wouldn't do to go back to the carousel—and Ficsur came along with his talk about—that other thing—and all of a sudden it happened, I don't know how. The police and the Jew with the pistol—and there I stood—and I'd lost the money playing cards—and I didn't want to be put in prison. [Demanding justification.] Maybe I was wrong not to go out and steal when there was nothing to eat in the house? Should I have gone out to steal for Julie?

The Magistrate. [Emphatically.] Yes.

Liliom. [After an astounded pause.] The police down there never said that.

The Magistrate. You beat that poor, frail

girl; you beat her because she loved you. How could you do that?

Liliom. We argued with each other—she said this and I said that—and because she was right I couldn't answer her—and I got mad—and the anger rose up in me—until it reached here [points to his throat]—and then I beat her.

The Magistrate. Are you sorry?

Liliom. [Shakes his head, but cannot utter the word "no"; continues softly.] When I touched her slender throat—then—if you like—you might say— [Falters, looks embarrassed at THE MAGISTRATE.]

The Magistrate. [Confidently expectant.] Are you sorry?

Liliom. [With a stare.] I'm not sorry for anything.

The Magistrate. Liliom, Liliom, it will be difficult to help you.

Liliom. I'm not asking any help.

The Magistrate. You were offered employment as a caretaker on Arader Street. [To THE FIRST.] Where is that entered?

The First. In the small docket. [Hands him the open book. THE MAGISTRATE looks in it.]

The Magistrate. Rooms, kitchen, quarterly wages, the privilege of keeping poultry. Why didn't you accept it?

Liliom. I'm not a caretaker. I'm no good at caretaking. To be a caretaker—you have to be a caretaker—

The Magistrate. If I said to you now: Liliom, go back on your stretcher. Tomorrow morning you will arise alive and well again. Would you be a caretaker then?

Liliom. No.

The Magistrate. Why not?

Liliom. Because—because that's just why I died.

The Magistrate. That is not true, my son. You died because you loved little Julie and the child she is bearing under her heart.

Liliom. No.

The Magistrate. Look me in the eye.

Liliom. [Looks him in the eye.] No.

The Magistrate. [Stroking his beard.] Liliom, Liliom, if it were not for our Heavenly patience— Go back to your seat. Number 16,474.

The First. [Looks in his notebook.] Stephan Kadar. [THE POORLY DRESSED MAN rises.]

The Magistrate. You came out today?

The Poorly Dressed Man. Today.

The Magistrate. [Indicating the crimson sea of clouds.] How long were you in there?

The Poorly Dressed Man. Thirteen years.

The Magistrate. Officer, you went to earth with him?

The First. Yes, sir.

The Magistrate. Stephan Kadar, after thirteen years of purification by fire you returned to earth to give proof that your soul had been burned clean. What good deed did you perform?

The Poorly Dressed Man. When I came to the village and looked in the window of our cottage I saw my poor little orphans sleeping peacefully. But it was raining and the rain beat into the room through a hole in the roof. So I went and fixed the roof so it wouldn't rain in any more. My hammering woke them up and they were afraid. But their mother came in to them and comforted them. She said to them: "Don't cry! It's your poor, dear father hammering up there. He's come back from the other world to fix the roof for us."

The Magistrate. Officer?

The First. That's what happened.

The Magistrate. Stephan Kadar, you have done a good deed. What you did will be written in books to gladden the hearts of children who read them. [Indicates the door at left.] The door is open to you. The eternal light awaits you. [THE FIRST escorts THE POORLY DRESSED MAN out at left with great deference.] Liliom! [LILIOM rises.] You have heard?

Liliom. Yes.

The Magistrate. When this man first appeared before us he was as stubborn as you. But now he has purified himself and withstood the test. He has done a good deed.

Liliom. What's he done, anyhow? Any roofer can fix a roof. It's much harder to be a barker in an amusement park.

The Magistrate. Liliom, you shall remain for sixteen years in the crimson fire until your child is full grown. By that time your pride and your stubbornness will have been burnt out of you. And when your daughter —

Liliom. My daughter!

The Magistrate. When your daughter has reached the age of sixteen — [LILIOM bows his head, covers his eyes with his

hands, and to keep from weeping laughs defiantly, sadly.]

The Magistrate. When your daughter has reached the age of sixteen you will be sent for one day back to earth.

Liliom. Me?

The Magistrate. Yes—just as you may have read in the legends of how the dead reappear on earth for a time.

Liliom. I never believed them.

The Magistrate. Now you see they are true. You will go back to earth one day to show how far the purification of your soul has progressed.

Liliom. Then I must show that I can do—like when you apply for a job—as a coachman?

The Magistrate. Yes—it is a test.

Liliom. And will I be told what I have to do?

The Magistrate. No.

Liliom. How will I know, then?

The Magistrate. You must decide that for yourself. That's what you burn sixteen years for. And if you do something good, something splendid for your child, then —

Liliom. [Laughs sadly.] Then? [All stand up and bow their heads reverently. There is a pause.] Then?

The Magistrate. Now I'll bid you farewell, Liliom. Sixteen years and a day shall pass before I see you again. When you have returned from earth you will come up before me again. Take heed and think well of some good deed to do for your child. On that will depend which door shall be opened to you up here. Now go, Liliom. [He exits at left. THE GUARD stands at attention. There is a pause.]

The First. [Approaches LILIOM.] Come along, my son. [He goes to the door at right; pulls open the bolt and waits.]

Liliom. [To the old GUARD, softly.] Say, officer.

The Guard. What do you want?

Liliom. Please—can I get—have you got —?

The Guard. What?

Liliom. [Whispers.] A cigarette?

[The old GUARD stares at him, goes a few paces to the left, shakes his head disapprovingly. Then his expression softens. He takes a cigarette from his pocket and, crossing to LILIOM—who has gone

over to the door at right—gives him the cigarette. The First throws open the door. An intense rose-colored light streams in. The glow of it is so strong that it blinds LILKOM and he takes a step backward and bows his head and covers his eyes with his hand before he steps forward into the light.]

SCENE SEVEN

SCENE—Sixteen years later. A small, tumble-down house on a bare, unenclosed plot of ground. Before the house is a tiny garden enclosed by a hip-high hedge.

At back a wooden fence crosses the stage; in the center of it is a door large enough to admit a wagon. Beyond the fence is a view of a suburban street which blends into a broad vista of tilled fields.

It is a bright Sunday in Spring.

In the garden a table for two is laid.

JULIE, her daughter LOUISE, WOLF and MARIE are discovered in the garden. WOLF is prosperously dressed, MARIE somewhat elaborately, with a huge hat.

Julie. You could stay for lunch.

Marie. Impossible, dear. Since he became the proprietor of the Café Sorrento, Wolf simply has to be there all the time.

Julie. But you needn't stay there all day, too.

Marie. Oh, yes. I sit near the cashier's cage, read the papers, keep an eye on the waiters and drink in the bustle and excitement of the great city.

Julie. And what about the children?

Marie. You know what modern families are like. Parents scarcely ever see their children these days. The four girls are with their governess, the three boys with their tutor.

Louise. Auntie, dear, do stay and eat with us.

Marie. [Importantly.] Impossible today, dear child, impossible. Perhaps some other time. Come, Mr. Beifeld.

Julie. Since when do you call your husband mister?

Wolf. I'd rather she did, dear lady. When we used to be very familiar we quarreled

all the time. Now we are formal with each other and get along like society folk. I kiss your hand, dear lady.

Julie. Good-bye, Wolf.

Marie. Adieu, my dear. [They embrace.] Adieu, my dear child.

Louise. Good-bye, Aunt Marie. Good-bye, Uncle Wolf.

[WOLF and MARIE exit.]

Julie. You can get the soup now, Louise dear.

[LOUISE goes into the house and reënters with the soup. They sit at the table.]

Louise. Mother, is it true we're not going to work at the jute factory any more?

Julie. Yes, dear.

Louise. Where then?

Julie. Uncle Wolf has gotten us a place in a big establishment where they make all kinds of fittings for cafés. We're to make big curtains, you know, the kind they hang in the windows, with lettering on them.

Louise. It'll be nicer there than at the jute factory.

Julie. Yes, dear. The work isn't as dirty and pays better, too. A poor widow like your mother is lucky to get it.

[They eat. LILKOM and the two HEAVENLY POLICEMEN appear in the big doorway at back. The POLICEMEN pass slowly by. LILKOM stands there alone a moment, then comes slowly down and pauses at the opening of the hedge. He is dressed as he was on the day of his death. He is very pale, but otherwise unaltered. JULIE, at the table, has her back to him. LOUISE sits facing the audience.]

Lilkom. Good day.

Louise. Good day.

Julie. Another beggar! What is it you want, my poor man?

Lilkom. Nothing.

Julie. We have no money to give, but if you care for a plate of soup— LOUISE goes into the house.] Have you come far today?

Lilkom. Yes—very far.

Julie. Are you tired?

Lilkom. Very tired.

Julie. Over there at the gate is a stone.

Sit down and rest. My daughter is bringing you the soup.

[LOUISE comes out of the house.]

Liliom. Is that your daughter?

Julie. Yes.

Liliom. [To LOUISE.] You are the daughter?

Louise. Yes, sir.

Liliom. A fine, healthy girl. [Takes the soup plate from her with one hand, while with the other he touches her arm. LOUISE draws back quickly.]

Louise. [Crosses to JULIE.] Mother!

Julie. What, my child?

Louise. The man tried to take me by the arm.

Julie. Nonsense! You only imagined it, dear. The poor, hungry man has other things to think about than fooling with young girls. Sit down and eat your soup.

[They eat.]

Liliom. [Eats, too, but keeps looking at them.] You work at the factory, eh?

Julie. Yes.

Liliom. Your daughter, too?

Louise. Yes.

Liliom. And your husband?

Julie. [After a pause.] I have no husband. I'm a widow.

Liliom. A widow?

Julie. Yes.

Liliom. Your husband—I suppose he's been dead a long time. [JULIE does not answer.] I say—has your husband been dead a long time?

Julie. A long time.

Liliom. What did he die of?

[JULIE is silent.]

Louise. No one knows. He went to America to work and he died there—in the hospital. Poor father, I never knew him.

Liliom. He went to America?

Louise. Yes, before I was born.

Liliom. To America?

Julie. Why do you ask so many questions? Did you know him, perhaps?

Liliom. [Puts the plate down.] Heaven knows! I've known so many people. Maybe I knew him, too.

Julie. Well, if you knew him, leave him and us in peace with your questions. He went to America and died there. That's all there is to tell.

Liliom. All right. All right. Don't be angry with me. I didn't mean any harm.

[There is a pause.]

Louise. My father was a very handsome man.

Julie. Don't talk so much.

Louise. Did I say anything—?

Liliom. Surely the little orphan can say that about her father.

Louise. My father could juggle so beautifully with three ivory balls that people used to advise him to go on the stage.

Julie. Who told you that?

Louise. Uncle Wolf.

Liliom. Who is that?

Louise. Mr. Wolf Beifeld, who owns the Café Sorrento.

Liliom. The one who used to be a porter?

Julie. [Astonished.] Do you know him, too? It seems that you know all Budapest.

Liliom. Wolf Beifeld is a long way from being all Budapest. But I do know a lot of people. Why shouldn't I know Wolf Beifeld?

Louise. He was a friend of my father.

Julie. He was not his friend. No one was.

Liliom. You speak of your husband so sternly.

Julie. What's that to you? Doesn't it suit you? I can speak of my husband any way I like. It's nobody's business but mine.

Liliom. Certainly, certainly—it's your own business. [Takes up his soup plate again. All three eat.]

Louise. [To JULIE.] Perhaps he knew father, too.

Julie. Ask him, if you like.

Louise. [Crosses to LILIOM. He stands up.] Did you know my father? [LILIOM nods. LOUISE addresses her mother.] Yes, he knew him.

Julie. [Rises.] You knew Andreas Zavoczki?

Liliom. Liliom? Yes.

Louise. Was he really a very handsome man?

Liliom. I wouldn't exactly say handsome.

Louise. [Confidently.] But he was an awfully good man, wasn't he?

Liliom. He wasn't so good, either. As far as I know he was what they called a clown, a barker in a carousel.

Louise. [Pleased.] Did he tell funny jokes?

Liliom. Lots of 'em. And he sang funny songs, too.

Louise. In the carousel?

Liliom. Yes—but he was something of a bully, too. He'd fight anyone. He even hit your dear little mother.

Julie. That's a lie.

Liliom. It's true.

Julie. Aren't you ashamed to tell the child such awful things about her father? Get out of here, you shameless liar. Eats our soup and our bread and has the impudence to slander our dead!

Liliom. I didn't mean—I—

Julie. What right have you to tell lies to the child? Take that plate, Louise, and let him be on his way. If he wasn't such a hungry-looking beggar, I'd put him out myself.

[*LOUISE takes the plate out of his hand.*]

Liliom. So, he didn't hit you?

Julie. No, never. He was always good to me.

Louise. [*Whispers.*] Did he tell funny stories, too?

Liliom. Yes, and such funny ones.

Julie. Don't speak to him any more. In God's name, go.

Louise. In God's name.

[*JULIE resumes her seat at the table and eats.*]

Liliom. If you please, Miss—I have a pack of cards in my pocket. And if you like, I'll show you some tricks that'll make you split your sides laughing. [*LOUISE holds LILIOM's plate in her left hand. With her right she reaches out and holds the garden gate shut.*] Let me in, just a little way, Miss, and I'll do the tricks for you.

Louise. Go, in God's name, and let us be. Why are you making those ugly faces?

Liliom. Don't chase me away, Miss; let me come in for just a minute—just for a minute—just long enough to let me show you something pretty, something wonderful. [*Opens the gate.*] Miss, I've something to give you.

[*Takes from his pocket a big red handkerchief in which is wrapped a glittering star from Heaven. He looks furtively about him to make sure that the Police are not watching.*]

Louise. What's that?

Liliom. Pst! A star!

[*With a gesture he indicates that he has stolen it out of the sky.*]

Julie. [*Sternly.*] Don't take anything from him. He's probably stolen it somewhere. [*To LILIOM.*] In God's name, be off with you.

Louise. Yes, be off with you. Be off. [*She slams the gate.*]

Liliom. Miss—please, Miss—I've got to do something good—or—do something good—a good deed—

Louise. [*Pointing with her right hand.*] That's the way out.

Liliom. Miss—

Louise. Get out!

Liliom. Miss! [*Looks up at her suddenly and slaps her extended hand, so that the slap resounds loudly.*]

Louise. Mother! [*Looks dazedly at LILIOM, who bows his head dismayed, forlorn. JULIE rises and looks at LILIOM in astonishment. There is a long pause.*]

Julie. [*Comes over to them slowly.*] What's the matter here?

Louise. [*Bewildered, does not take her eyes off LILIOM.*] Mother—the man—he hit me—on the hand—hard—I heard the sound of it—but it didn't hurt—mother—it, didn't hurt—it was like a caress—as if he had just touched my hand tenderly.

[*She hides behind JULIE. LILIOM sulkily raises his head and looks at JULIE.*]

Julie. [*Softly.*] Go, my child. Go into the house. Go.

Louise. [*Going.*] But mother—I'm afraid—it sounded so loud— [*Weepingly.*] And it didn't hurt at all—just as if he'd—kissed my hand instead—mother. [*She hides her face.*]

Julie. Go in, my child, go in.

[*LOUISE goes slowly into the house.*]

JULIE watches her until she has disappeared, then turns slowly to LILIOM.

Julie. You struck my child.

Liliom. Yes—I struck her.

Julie. Is that what you came for, to strike my child?

Liliom. No—I didn't come for that—but I did strike her—and now I'm going back.

Julie. In the name of the Lord Jesus, who are you?

Liliom. [*Simply.*] A poor, tired beggar

who came a long way and who was hungry. And I took your soup and bread and I struck your child. Are you angry with me?

Julie. [*Her hand on her heart; fearfully, wonderingly.*] Jesus protect me—I don't understand it—I'm not angry—not angry at all—

[*LILIOM goes to the doorway and leans against the doorpost, his back to the audience. JULIE goes to the table and sits.*]

Julie. Louise! [*LOUISE comes out of the house.*] Sit down, dear, we'll finish eating.

Louise. Has he gone?

Julie. Yes. [*They are both seated at the table. LOUISE, her head in her hands, is staring into space.*] Why don't you eat, dear?

Louise. What has happened, mother?

Julie. Nothing, my child.

[*The HEAVENLY POLICEMEN appear outside. LILIOM walks slowly off at left. The FIRST POLICEMAN makes a deploring gesture. Both shake their heads deplorably and follow LILIOM slowly off at left.*]

Louise. Mother, dear, why won't you tell me?

Julie. What is there to tell you, child? Nothing has happened. We were peacefully eating, and a beggar came who talked of bygone days, and then I thought of your father.

Louise. My father?

Julie. Your father—Liliom.

[*There is a pause.*]

Louise. Mother—tell me—has it ever happened to you—has anyone ever hit you—without hurting you in the least?

Julie. Yes, my child. It has happened to me, too.

[*There is a pause.*]

Louise. Is it possible for someone to hit you—hard like that—real loud and hard—and not hurt you at all?

Julie. It is possible, dear—that someone may beat you and beat you and beat you,—and not hurt you at all.—

[*There is a pause. Nearby an organ-grinder has stopped. The music of his organ begins.*]

THE END

THE RATS

(DIE RATTEN)

By GERHART HAUPTMANN

Translated from the German by LUDWIG LEWISOHN

FROM HAUPTMANN'S DRAMATIC WORKS, VOL. II,
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GERHART HAUPTMANN AND HIS PLAYS

GERHART HAUPTMANN, the greatest dramatist of modern Germany, and the author of *The Rats*, was born in the province of Obersalzbrunn, in Silesia (then a portion of Germany) in 1862. His first wish was to be a sculptor, and he studied art in the German cities of Breslau and Jena and also in Italy. After he settled in Berlin, he became associated with that remarkable experimental theatre known as "The Free Stage," a counterpart of Antoine's Théâtre Libre in Paris. In 1889 the Free Stage produced his play *Before Dawn*, which created a sensation; and, in 1892, his naturalistic tragedy *The Weavers*, which established his reputation. Since that time Hauptmann has dominated the German stage, and has become one of the pervading influences in modern drama.

Although Hauptmann is usually labelled a "naturalist," his thirty plays include a variety of forms; not only naturalistic tragedies, such as *The Rats* and *The Weavers*, and naturalistic comedies such as *The Beaver Coat*, but also historical plays, in which, like Strindberg and Shaw, he applied the principles of modern psychology to old material, such as *Charlemagne's Hostage*; fantasies, such as *And Pippa Dances*; dream plays, such as *Hannele*; and fairy plays, such as the allegorical dramatic poem *The Sunken Bell*. But whatever his method, it is always dictated by the inner necessities of his subject-matter. In this light, it is unjust to accuse Hauptmann of never having found himself—of having tried many methods without pursuing any one of them to its consummation.

Despite his fine achievements in various forms, Hauptmann is most widely known as a naturalist, and for good reason. It is true that he was not the very first to use the naturalistic method in the drama. Henri Becque in France had begun the movement; Tolstoi in Russia had written naturalistic plays, for naturalism was indigenous to Russia. But Hauptmann consciously carried the movement further, and achieved in it larger results. It was the object of naturalism to bring the drama back to reality and truth; and to evolve a technique that should be consonant with the subject-matter.

In carrying out these principles Hauptmann created a method that discards traditional artifices and subordinates plot invention to the portrayal of character. In his capacity simply as a naturalist, he selected his material with care and remoulded it into a shape that represents human beings in the guise of a product of the two great forces, heredity and environment. He often chose untutored persons as his subjects, partly, perhaps, because such persons more clearly show the operation of these forces, and also, as he himself stated, because he was determined to demonstrate the worth of common life as subject-matter even for tragedy. Although naturalism is now often referred to as an outworn method, such naturalism as Hauptmann's can never be out of date: it will be appropriate whenever the dramatist treats material that naturally dictates such a method of expression.

The Rats, although not so well known as *The Weavers*, shares the fine qualities of that play and is characteristic of Hauptmann's practice. Both its strength and its weakness are obvious. In one light it is a propaganda play, in which Hauptmann attempts to vindicate his contention that the life of common persons furnishes matter as worthy of tragic treatment as the life of the great. To achieve this purpose he introduces, as a contrast to the major plot, a minor plot in which the old idea of tragedy is expounded by one of the old school. Hence, the play is, as Lewisohn states, "a naturalistic tragedy and, at the same time, its criticism and defence." But, although such an ill-assorted union of plots was doubtless essential to Hauptmann's purpose, the play fails to fuse successfully its two plots into one organic whole, and insofar fails to be a perfect work of art. But simply as a naturalistic tragedy of lowly life, yet universal in its humanity, the major plot, which has for its protagonist Mrs. John, is so superb in its power that it actually triumphs over the structural weakness of the play as a whole.

The first production of *The Rats* was given in Berlin in 1911. Apparently, the play has never been produced in either England or America. Hauptmann himself, after complacently accepting the adoration of Adolf Hitler and the Nazis, died in 1946.

CHARACTERS

HARRO HASSENREUTER, *formerly a theatrical
manager*
MRS. HARRO HASSENREUTER
WALBURGA, *their daughter*
PASTOR SPITTA
ERICH SPITTA, *postulant for Holy Orders,
his son*
ALICE RÜTTERBUSCH, *actress*
NATHANAEI JETTEL, *court actor*
KÄFERSTEIN, } *Pupils of HASSENREUTER*
DR. KEGEL, }
JOHN, *foreman-mason*
MRS. JOHN
BRUNO MECHELKE, *her brother*
PAULINE PIPERCARCKA, *a servant girl*
MRS. SIDONIE KNOBBE
SELMA, *her daughter*
QUAQUARO, *house-steward*
MRS. KIELBACKE
POLICEMAN SCHIERKE
TWO INFANTS

The action takes place in Berlin at the present day

THE RATS

ACT ONE

The attic of a former cavalry barracks in Berlin. A windowless room that receives all its light from a lamp which burns suspended over a round table. From the back wall opens a straight passage which connects the room with the outer door—a door with iron hasps and a primitive signal bell which any one desiring to enter rings by means of a bell rope. A door in the right wall leads to an adjoining room, one in the left wall leads to the stairs into the loft immediately under the roof. Into this store room, as well as into the space visible to the spectator, the former theatrical manager, HARRO HASSENREUTER, has gathered his collection of properties. In the prevalent gloom it is difficult to decide whether the place is the armour room of an old castle, a museum of antiquities or the shop of a costumer. Stands with helmets and breast-plates are put up on either side of the passage; a row of similar stands almost covers the two sides of the front room. The stairs wind upward between two mailed figures. At the head of the stairs is a wooden trap-door. In the left foreground, against the wall, is a high desk. Ink, pens, old ledgers, a tall stool, as well as several chairs with tall backs and the round table make it clear that the room serves the purposes of an office. On the table is a decanter for water and several glasses; above the desk hang a number of photographs. These photographs represent HASENREUTER in the part of Karl Moor (in Schiller's "Robbers"), as well as in a number of other parts. One of the mailed dummies wears a huge laurel wreath about its neck. The laurel wreath is tied with a ribbon which bears, in gilt letters, the following inscription: "To our gifted manager Hassenreuter, from his grateful colleagues." A series of enormous red bows shows the inscriptions: "To the inspired presenter of Karl Moor . . . To the incomparable, unforgettable Karl Moor" . . . etc., etc. The room is utilised as far as its space will permit for the storing of

costumes. Wherever possible, German, Spanish and English garments of every age hang on hooks. Swedish riding boots, Spanish rapiers and German broadswords are scattered about. The door to the left bears the legend: Library. The whole room displays picturesque disorder. Trumpery of all kinds—weapons, goblets, cups—is scattered about. It is Sunday toward the end of May.

At the table in the middle of the room are sitting, MRS. JOHN (between thirty-five and forty) and a very young servant girl, PAULINE PIPERCARCKA. PAULINE, vulgarly overdressed—jacket, hat, sunshade—sits straight upright. Her pretty, round little face shows signs of long weeping. Her figure betrays the fact that she is approaching motherhood. She draws letters on the floor with the end of her sunshade.

Mrs. John. Well, sure now! That's right! That's what I says, Pauline.

Pauline. All right. So I'm goin' to Schlachtensee or to Halensee. I gotta go and see if I c'n meet him!

[She dries her tears and is about to rise.]

Mrs. John. [Prevents PAULINE from getting up.] Pauline! For God's sake don't you be doin' that! Not that there, for nothin' in the world! That don't do nothin' but raise a row and cost money an' don't bring you in nothin'. Look at the condition you're in. An' that way you want to go an' run after that there low lived feller?

Pauline. Then my landlady c'n wait an' wait for me to-day. I'll jump into the Landwehr canal an' drown myself.

Mrs. John. Pauline! An' what for? What for, I'd like to know? Now you just listen to me for a speck of a minute, just for God's sake, for the teeniest speck of one an' pay attention to what I'm goin' to propose to you! You know yourself how I says to you, out on Alexander square, right by the chronometer—says I to you right out, as I was comin' out o' the market an' sees your condition with half an eye: He don't want to acknowledge nothin', eh? That's

what I axed you right out!—That happens to many gals here, to all of 'em—to millions! An' then I says to you . . . what did I say? Come along, I says, an' I'll help you!

Pauline. O' course, I don't never dare to show myself at home lookin' this way. Mother, she'd cry it out at the first look. An' father, he'd knock my head against the wall an' throw me out in the street. An' I ain't got no more money left neither—nothin' but just two pieces o' gold that I got sewed up in the linin' o' my jacket. That feller didn't leave me no crown an' he didn't leave me no penny.

Mrs. John. Miss, my husband, he's a foreman-mason. I just wants you to pay attention . . . just for heaven's sake, pay attention to the propositions that I'm goin' to make to you. They'll help us both. You'll be helped out an' the same way I'll be. An' what's more, Paul, that's my husband, he'll be helped, because he'd like, for all the world, to have a child, an' our only one, little Adelbert, he went an' died o' the croup. Your child'll be as well taken care of as an own child. Then you c'n go an' you c'n look up your sweetheart an' you c'n go back into service an' home to your people, an' the child is well off, an' nobody in the world don't need to know nothin'.

Pauline. I'll do it just outa spite—that's what! An' drown myself! [*She rises.*] An' a note, a note, I'll leave in my jacket, like this: You drove your Pauline to her death with your cursed meanness! An' then I'll put down his name in full: Alois Theophil Brunner, instrument-maker. Then he c'n see how he'll get along in the world with the murder o' me on his conscience.

Mrs. John. Wait a minute, Miss! I gotta unlock the door first.

[*MRS. JOHN acts as though she were about to conduct PAULINE to the door.*]

[*Before the two women reach the passage, BRUNO MECHELKE enters with slow and suspicious demeanour by the door at the left and remains standing in the room. BRUNO is short rather than tall, but with a powerful bull's neck and athletic shoulders. His forehead is low and receding, his close-clipped hair like a brush,*

his skull round and small. His face is brutal and his left nostril has been ripped open sometime and imperfectly healed. The fellow is about nineteen years old. He bends forward, and his great, lumpish hands are joined to muscular arms. The pupils of his eyes are small, black and piercing. He is trying to repair a rat trap.]

[*BRUNO whistles to his sister as he would to a dog.*]

Mrs. John. I'm comin' now, Bruno! What d'you want?

Bruno. [*Apparently absorbed by the trap.*] Thought I was goin' to put up traps here.

Mrs. John. Did you put the bacon in? [*To PAULINE.*] It's only my brother. Don't be scared, Miss.

Bruno. [*As before.*] I seen the Emperor William to-day. I marched along wi' the guard.

Mrs. John. [*To PAULINE, who stands fearful and moveless in BRUNO's presence.*] 'Tain't nothin' but my brother. You c'n stay.—[*To BRUNO.*] Boy, what're you lookin' that way for again? The young lady is fair scared o' you.

Bruno. [*As before, without looking up.*] Brrr-rr-rr! I'm a ghost.

Mrs. John. Hurry an' go up in the loft an' set your traps.

Bruno. [*Slowly approaching the table.*] Aw, that business ain't no good 'cept to starve on! When I goes to sell matches, I gets more outa it.

Pauline. Good-bye, Mrs. John.

Mrs. John. [*Raging at her brother.*] Are you goin' to leave me alone?

Bruno. [*Knuckling under.*] Aw, don't go on so. I'm leavin'.

[*Obediently he withdraws into the adjoining room. MRS. JOHN locks the door behind him with a determined gesture.*]

Pauline. That's a feller I wouldn't like to meet in the Tiergarten. Not by night an' not by day neither.

Mrs. John. If I sets Bruno on anyone an' he gets at him, God help him!

Pauline. Good-bye. I don't like this here place. If you wants to see me again, Mrs. John, I'd rather meet you at a bench on the Kreuzberg.

Mrs. John. Pauline, I brought up Bruno with sorrow and trouble by day an' by night. An' I'll be twenty times better to your child. So when it's born, Pauline, I'll take it, an' I swears to you by my father an' mother what died in the Lord an' what I goes to visit the graves of out in Rüdersdorf one Sunday a year an' puts candles on 'em an' don' let nobody keep me back—I swears to you that little crittur'll live on the fat o' the land just like a born prince nor a born princess couldn't be treated no better.

Pauline. I'm goin' and with my last penny I'm goin' to buy vitriol—I don't care who it hits! An' I'll throw it in the face o' the wench that he goes with . . . I don't care who it hits . . . right in the middle o' the mug. I don't care! It c'n burn up his fine-lookin' phiz! I don't care! It c'n burn off his beard an' burn out his eyes if he goes with other women! What did he do? Cheated me! Ruined me! Took my money! Robbed me o' my honour! That's what the damn' dog did—seduced me an' lied to me an' left me an' kicked me out into the world! I don't care who it hits! I wants him to be blind! I wants the stuff to burn his nose offa his face! I wants it to burn him offa the earth!

Mrs. John. Pauline, as I hopes to be happy hereafter, I tells you, from the minute where that there little one is born . . . it's goin' to be treated like . . . well, I don't know what! . . . as if it was born to be put in silks an' in satins. All you gotta do is to have some confidence—that's what! You just say: Yes. I got it all figgered out. It c'n be done, it c'n be done—that's what I tells you! An' no doctor an' no police an' no landlady don't has to know nothin'. An' then, first of all, you gets paid a hundred an' twenty crowns what I saved scrubbin' an' charrin' here for manager Hassenreuter.

Pauline. I might strangle it when it's born, rather'n sell it!

Mrs. John. Who's talkin' about sellin'?

Pauline. Look at the frights an' the misery I've stood from October las' to this very day. My intended gives me the go; my landlady puts me out! They gives me notice at a lodgin's. What does I do that I has to be despised an' cursed an' kicked aroun'?

Mrs. John. That's what I says. That's

cause the devil is still gettin' the better of our Lord Jesus.

[Unnoticed and busy with the trap as before BRUNO has quietly re-entered by the door.]

Bruno. *[With a strange intonation, sharply and yet carelessly.]* Lamps!

Pauline. That feller scares me. Lemme go!

Mrs. John. *[Makes violently for BRUNO.]* Is you goin' to go where you belongs? I told you I'd call you!

Bruno. *[In the same tone as before.]* Well, Jette, I jus' said: Lamps!

Mrs. John. Are you crazy? What's the meanin' o' that—lamps?

Bruno. Ain't that a ringin' o' the front bell?

Mrs. John. *[Is frightened, listens and restrains PAULINE, who makes a motion to go.]* Sh, Miss, wait! Just wait one little minute!

[BRUNO continues whistling as the two women stop to listen.]

Mrs. John. *[Softly and in a frightened tone to BRUNO.]* I don't hear nothin'!

Bruno. You ol' dried up piece! You better go an' get another pair o' ears!

Mrs. John. That'd be the first time in all the three months that the manager'd be comin' in when it's Sunday.

Bruno. If that there theayter feller comes, he c'n engage me right on the spot.

Mrs. John. *[Violently.]* Don't talk rot!

Bruno. *[Grinning at PAULINE.]* Maybe you don't believe it, Miss, but I went an' took the clown's hoss at Schumann's circus aroun' the ring three times. Them's the kind o' things I does. An' is I goin' to be scared?

Pauline. *[Seeming to notice for the first time the fantastic strangeness of the place in which she finds herself. Frightened and genuinely perturbed.]* Mother o' God, what kind o' place is this?

Mrs. John. Whoever c'n that be?

Bruno. 'Tain't the manager, Jette! More like it's a spout what's drippin'!

Mrs. John. Miss, you be so kind an' go for two minutes, if you don't mind, up into this here loft. Maybe somebody's comin' that just wants some information.

[In her growing terror PAULINE does as she is asked to do. She clambers up the stairs to the loft, the trap-door being open. Mrs.

JOHN *has taken up a position in which she can, at need, hide PAULINE from anyone entering the room.*

[PAULINE disappears: MRS. JOHN and BRUNO remain alone.]

Bruno. What business has you with that pious mug?

Mrs. John. That ain't none o' your business, y'understan'?

Bruno. I was just axin' 'cause you was so careful that nobody should see her. Otherwise I don't know's I gives a damn.

Mrs. John. An' you ain't supposed to!

Bruno. Much obliged. Maybe I better toddle along, then.

Mrs. John. D'you know what you owes me, you scamp?

Bruno. [*Carelessly.*] What are you gettin' excited for? What is I doin' to you? What d'you want? I gotta go to my gal now. I'm sleepy. Las' night I slept under a lot o' bushes in the park. An' anyhow, I'm cleaned out— [*He turns his trousers pockets inside out.*] An' in consequence o' that I gotta go an' earn some-thin'.

Mrs. John. Here you stays! Don't you dare move! If you do you c'n whine like a whipped purp an' you'll never be gettin' so much as a penny outa me no more—that's what you won't! Bruno, you're goin' ways you hadn't ought to.

Bruno. Aw, what d'you think? Is I goin' to be a dam' fool? D'you think I ain' goin' when I gets a good livin' offa Hulda? [*He pulls out a dirty card-case.*] Not so much as a measly pawn ticket has I got. Tell me what you want an' then lemme go!

Mrs. John. What I wants? Of you? What're you good for anyhow? You ain't good for nothin' excep' for your sister who ain't right in her head to feel sorry for you, you loafer an' scamp!

Bruno. Maybe you *ain'* right in your head sometimes!

Mrs. John. Our father, he used to say when you was no more'n five an' six years old an' used to do rowdy things, that we couldn't never be proud o' you an' that I might as well let you go hang. An' my husband what's a reel honest decent man . . . why, you can't be seen alongside of a good man like him.

Bruno. Sure, I knows all that there, Jette.

But things ain't that easy to straighten out. I knows all right I was born with a kind o' a twist in my back, even if nobody don't see it. No, I wasn't born in no castle. Well, I gotto do what I c'n do with my twist. All right. What d'you want? 'Tain't for the rats you're keepin' me. You wanta hush up somethin' wi' that whore!

Mrs. John. [*Shaking her hand under BRUNO's nose.*] You give away one word o' this an' I'll kill you, I'll make a corpse o' you!

Bruno. Well now, looka here! I'm goin', y'understan'? [*He mounts the stairs.*] Maybe someday I'll be droppin' into good luck without knowin' it.

[*He disappears through the trap-door. MRS. JOHN hurriedly blows out the lamp and taps her way to the door of the library. She enters it but does not wholly close the door behind her.—The noise that BRUNO actually heard was that of a key being turned in a rusty keyhole. A light step is now heard approaching the door. For a moment the street noises of Berlin as well as the yelling of children in the outer halls had been audible. Strains of a hurdy-gurdy from the yard.—WALBURGA HASSENREUTER enters with hesitating and embarrassed steps. The girl is not yet sixteen and is pretty and innocent of appearance. Sunshade, light-coloured summer dress, not coming below the ankle.*]

Walburga. [*Halts, listens, then says nervously.*] Papa!—Isn't anyone up here yet? Papa! Papa! [*She listens long and intently and then says.*] Why, what an odour of coal oil there is here! [*She finds matches, lights one, is about to light the lamp and burns her fingers against the hot chimney.*] Ouch! Why, dear me! Who is here?

[*She has cried out and is about to run away. MRS. JOHN reappears.*]

Mrs. John. Well, Miss Walburga, who's goin' to go an' kick up a row like that! You c'n be reel quiet. 'Tain't nobody but me!

Walburga. Dear me, but I've had an awful fright, Mrs. John.

Mrs. John. Well, then I advise you to be gettin' out o' here to-day—on Sunday?

Walburga. [*Laying her hand over her heart.*] Why, my heart is almost standing still yet, Mrs. John.

Mrs. John. What's the matter, Miss Walburga? What's frightenin' you? You oughta know that from your pa that Sunday an' week day I gotta be workin' aroun' here with them boxes an' cases, dustin' an' tryin' to get rid o' the moths! An' then, after two or three weeks, when I've gone over the twelve or eighteen hundred theater rags that're lyin' here—then I gotta start all over again.

Walburga. I was frightened because the chimney of the lamp was still quite hot to the touch.

Mrs. John. That's right. That there lamp was burnin' an' I put it out jus' a minute ago. [*She lifts up the chimney.*] It don't burn me; my hands is hard. [*She lights the wick.*] Well, now we has light. Now I lit it again. What's the danger here? I don't see nothin'.

Walburga. But you do look like a ghost, Mrs. John.

Mrs. John. How do you say I looks?

Walburga. Oh, it just seems so when one comes out of the vivid sunlight into the darkness, into these musty holes. It seems as though one were surrounded by ghosts.

Mrs. John. Well, you little ghost, why did you come up here? Is you alone or has you got somebody with you? Maybe papa'll be comin' in yet?

Walburga. No, papa has been granted an important audience out in Potsdam to-day.

Mrs. John. All right! What're you lookin' for here then?

Walburga. I? Oh, I just came out for a walk!

Mrs. John. Well, then I advise you to be gettin' out o' here again. No sun don't shine into your papa's lumber-room.

Walburga. You look so grey! You had better go out into the sunlight yourself!

Mrs. John. Oh, the sunlight's for fine folks! All I needs is a couple o' pounds o' dust an' dirt on my lungs.—You just go along, missie! I gotta get to work. I don't need nothin' else. I jus' lives on mildew an' insec'-powder. [*She coughs.*]

Walburga. [*Nervously.*] You needn't tell papa that I was up here.

Mrs. John. Me? Ain't I got somethin' better to do'n that?

Walburga. [*With assumed carelessness.*] And if Mr. Spitta were to ask after me . . .

Mrs. John. Who?

Walburga. The young gentleman who gives us private lessons at home . . .

Mrs. John. Well, s'posin'?

Walburga. Then be so kind as to tell him that I've been here but left again at once.

Mrs. John. So I'm to tell Mr. Spitta but not papa?

Walburga. [*Involuntarily.*] Oh, for heaven's sake, no!

Mrs. John. Well, you jus' wait an' see! You jus' look out! There's many a one has looked like you an' has come from your part o' the city an'—has gone to the dogs in the ditch in Dragoner street or, even, behind Swedish hangin's in Barnim street.

Walburga. Surely you don't mean to insinuate, Mrs. John, and surely you don't believe that there's anything unpermitted or improper in my relations with Mr. Spitta?

Mrs. John. [*In extreme fright.*] Shut up! —Somebody's put the key into the keyhole.

Walburga. Blow out the lamp!

[*MRS. JOHN blows out the lamp quickly.*]

Walburga. Papa!

Mrs. John. Miss! Up into the loft with you!

[*MRS. JOHN and WALBURGA both disappear through the trap-door, which closes behind them.*]

[*Two gentlemen, the manager HARRO HASSENREUTER and the court actor NATHANAEL JETTEL, appear in the frame of the outer door. The manager is of middle height, clean shaven, fifty years old. He takes long steps and shows a lively temperament in his whole demeanour. The cut of his face is noble, his eyes have a vivid, adventurous expression. His behaviour is somewhat noisy, which accords with his thoroughly fiery nature. He wears a light overcoat, a top-hat thrust back on his head, full dress suit and patent leather boots. The overcoat,*

which is unbuttoned, reveals the decorations which almost cover his chest.—Jettel wears a suit of flannels under a very light spring overcoat. In his left hand he holds a straw hat and an elegant cane; he wears tan shoes. He also is clean shaven and over fifty years old.]

Hassenreuter. [Calls.] John! Mrs. John! —Well, now you see my catacombs, my dear fellow! *Sic transit gloria mundi!* Here I've stored everything—*mutatis mutandis*—that was left of my whole theatrical glory—trash, trash! Old rags! Old tatters! —John! John! She's been here, for the lamp chimney is still quite hot! [He strikes a match and lights the lamp.] *Fiat lux, pereat mundus!* Now you can get a good view of my paradise of moths and rats and fleas!

Jettel. You received my card, didn't you, my dear manager?

Hassenreuter. Mrs. John!—I'll see if she is in the loft up there. [He mounts the stairs and rattles at the trap-door.] Locked! And of course the wretched creature has the key tied to her apron. [He beats enragedly against the trap-door with his fist.] John! John!

Jettel. [Somewhat impatient.] Can't we manage without this Mrs. John?

Hassenreuter. What? Do you think that I, in my dress suit and with all my decorations, just back from His Highness, can go through my three hundred boxes and cases just to rout out the wretched rags that you are pleased to need for your engagement here?

Jettel. I beg your pardon. But I'm not wont to appear in rags on my tours.

Hassenreuter. Man alive, then play in your drawers for all I care! It wouldn't worry me! Only don't quite forget who's standing before you. Because the court actor Jettel is pleased to emit a whistle—well, that's no reason why the manager Harro Hassenreuter should begin to dance. Confound it, because some comedian wants a shabby turban or two old boots, is that any reason why a *pater familias* like myself must give up his only spare time at home on Sunday afternoon? I suppose you expect me to creep about on all fours into the corners here? No, my good fellow, for

that kind of thing you'll have to look elsewhere!

Jettel. [Quite calmly.] Would you mind telling me, if possible, who has been treading on your corns?

Hassenreuter. My boy, it's scarcely an hour since I had my legs under the same table with a prince: *post hoc, ergo propter hoc!* —On your account I got into a confounded 'bus and drove out to this confounded hole, and so . . . if you don't know how to value my kindness, you can get out!

Jettel. You made an appointment with me for four o'clock. Then you let me wait one solid hour in this horrible tenement, in these lovely halls with their filthy brats! Well, I waited and didn't address the slightest reproach to you. And now you have the good taste and the good manners to use me as a kind of a cuspidor!

Hassenreuter. My boy . . .

Jettel. The devil! I'm not your boy! You seem to be kind of a clown that I ought to force to turn somersaults for pennies! [Highly indignant, he picks up his hat and cane and goes.]

Hassenreuter. [Starts, breaks out into boisterous laughter and then calls out after JETTEL.] Don't make yourself ridiculous! And, anyhow, I'm not a costumer!

[The slamming of the outer door is heard.]

Hassenreuter. [Pulls out his watch.] The confounded idiot! The damned mutton head.—It's a blessing the ridiculous ass went! [He puts the watch back into his pocket, pulls it out again at once and listens. He walks restlessly to and fro, then stops, gazes into his top-hat, which contains a mirror, and combs his hair carefully. He walks over to the middle door and opens a few of the letters that lie heaped up there. At the same time he sings in a trilling voice:]

"O Strassburg, O Strassburg,
Thou beautiful old town."

[Once more he looks at his watch. Suddenly the doorbell at his head rings.] On the minute! Ah, but these little girls can be punctual when they really care about it! [He hurries out into the hall and is heard to extend a loud and merry welcome to someone. The trumpet notes of his voice are soon accompanied by the bell-like tones of a woman's speaking. Very soon he reap-

pears, at his side an elegant young lady, ALICE RÜTTERBUSCH.]—Alice! My little Alice! Come here where I can see you, little girl! Come here into the light! I must see whether you're the same infinitely delightful, mad little Alice that you were in the great days of my career in Alsace? Girl, it was I who taught you to walk! I held your leading strings for your first steps. I taught you how to talk, girl! The things you said! I hope you haven't forgotten!

Alice Rütterbusch. Now, look here! You don't believe that I'm an ungrateful girl?

Hassenreuter. [*Draws up her veil.*] Why, girlie, you've grown younger instead of older.

Alice Rütterbusch. [*Flushed with delight.*] Well, a person would just have to lie like everything to say that you had changed to your disadvantage! But, do you know—it's awful dark up here really and—Harro, maybe you wouldn't mind opening a window a little—oh, the air's a bit heavy, too.

Hassenreuter. "Pillicock sat on Pillicock-hill."

"But mice and rats and such small deer Have been Tom's food for seven long year."

In all seriousness I have passed through dark and difficult times! In spite of the fact that I preferred not to write you of it, I have no doubt that you are informed.

Alice Rütterbusch. But is wasn't extra friendly, you know, for you not to answer one little word to the long, nice letter I wrote you.

Hassenreuter. Ha, ha, ha! What's the use of answering a little girl's letter if one has both hands full taking care of oneself and can't possibly be of the slightest use to her? Pshaw! *E nihilo nihil fit!* In the vernacular: You can't get results out of nothing! Moth and dust! Dust and moths! And that's all my efforts for the German culture in the west profited me!

Alice Rütterbusch. So you didn't turn over your collection of properties to manager Kunz.

Hassenreuter. "O Strassburg, O Strassburg, Thou beautiful old town!"

No, little one, I didn't leave my properties in Strassburg! This ex-waiter, ex-inn-keeper and lessee of disreputable dance halls, this idiot, this imbecile who succeeded me, didn't happen to want my stuff. No,

I didn't leave my collection of properties there, but what I did have to leave there was forty thousand crowns of hard-earned money left me from my old touring days as an actor, and, in addition, fifty thousand crowns which formed the dowry of my excellent wife. However, it was a piece of good luck, after all, that I kept the properties. Ha, ha, ha! These fellows here . . . [*he touches one of the mailed figures*] . . . surely you remember them?

Alice Rütterbusch. Could I forget my pasteboard knights?

Hassenreuter. Very well, then: it was these pasteboard knights and all the other trash that surrounds them, that actually, after his hegira, kept the old rag-picker and costumer, Harro Eberhard Hassenreuter, above water. But let's speak of cheerful things: I saw with pleasure in the paper that his Excellency has engaged you for Berlin.

Alice Rütterbusch. I don't care a great deal about it! I'd rather play for you, and you must promise me, whenever you undertake the management of a theatre again—you will promise, won't you?—that you'll let me break my contract right away? [*The MANAGER laughs heartily.*] I had to be annoyed quite enough for three long years by the barn-stormers of the provinces. Berlin I don't like, and a court theatre least of all. Lord, what people and what a profession it is! You know I belong to your collection—I've always belonged to it! [*She stands up primly among the pasteboard knights.*]

Hassenreuter. Ha, ha, ha, ha! Well then, come to my arms, faithful knight! [*He opens his arms wide, she flies into them, and they now salute each other with long, continuous kisses.*]

Alice Rütterbusch. Go on, Harro. Now tell me. How is your wife?

Hassenreuter. Teresa gets along very well except that she gets fatter every day in spite of sorrow and worries.—Girl, girl, how fragrant you are! [*He presses her to him.*] Do you know that you're a devilish dangerous person?

Alice Rütterbusch. D'you think I'm an idiot? Of course I'm dangerous!

Hassenreuter. Well, I'll be . . . !

Alice Rütterbusch. Why, do you think if I didn't know it was dangerous, dangerous

for us both, I'd make an appointment with you out here in this lovely neighbourhood, under this stuffy roof? By the way, though, since I'm always bound to have the queerest luck if ever I do go a bit on questionable ways, whom should I meet on the stairs but Nathanael Jettel? I almost ran into the gentleman's arms! He'll take good care that my visiting you doesn't remain our secret.

Hassenreuter. I must have made a mistake in writing down the date. The fellow insists on asserting—ha, ha, ha!—that I made an engagement with him for this very afternoon.

Alice Rütterbusch. And that wasn't the only person I met on the six flights. And as for the dear little children that roll about on the stairs here! What they called out after me was unparliamentary to a degree—such vulgarities as I've never heard from such little beggars in my life.

Hassenreuter. [*Laughs, then speaks seriously.*] Ah, yes! But one gets accustomed to that. You could never write down all the life that sweeps down these stairs with its soiled petticoats—the life that cringes and creeps, moans, sighs, sweats, cries out, curses, mutters, hammers, planes, jeers, steals, drives its dark trades up and down these stairs—the sinister creatures that hide here, playing their zithers, grinding their accordions, sticking in need and hunger and misery, leading their vicious lives—no, it's beyond one's power of recording. And your old manager, last but not least, runs, groans, sighs, sweats, cries out and curses with the best of them. Ha, ha, ha, girlie! I've had a pretty wretched time.

Alice Rütterbusch. Oh, by the way, d'you know whom I ran into just as I was making for the railroad station at the Zoölogical Garden? The good old Prince Statthalter! And straight off, cool as a cucumber—that's my way you know—I tripped along next to him for twenty minutes and got him absorbed in a conversation. And then something happened, Harro, upon my honour, just as I'm going to tell you—literally and truly: Suddenly on the bridle-path His Majesty came riding along with a great suite. I thought I'd sink into the earth with embarrassment. And His Majesty laughed right out and threatened his Serenity playfully with his finger. But

I was delighted, you may believe me. The main thing comes now, however. Just think! His Serenity asked me whether I'd be glad to go back to Strassburg if the manager Hassenreuter were to assume direction of the theatre there again. Well, you may know that I almost jumped for joy!

Hassenreuter. [*Throws off his overcoat and stands with his decorations displayed.*] You probably couldn't help noticing that His Serenity had had a most excellent breakfast. Aha! We had breakfast together! We attended an exquisite little stag party given by Prince Ruprecht out in Potsdam. I don't deny, therefore, that a turn for good may take place in the miserable fate of your friend.

Alice Rütterbusch. Sweetheart, you look like a statesman, like an ambassador!

Hassenreuter. Ah, don't you know this breast covered with high and exalted decorations? Klärchen and Egmont! Here you can drink your fill! [*They embrace each other anew.*] *Carpe diem!* Enjoy the passing hour! Ah, my little Miss Simplicity, champagne is not recorded at present on the repertory of your old manager, inspirer and friend. [*He opens a wooden case and draws forth a bottle of wine.*] But this old cloister vintage isn't to be sneezed at either! [*He pulls the cork. At the same moment the door bell rings.*] What? Sh! I wonder who has the monstrous impudence to ring here on Sunday afternoon? [*The bell rings with increased violence.*] Confound it all—the fellow must be a lunatic. Little girl, suppose you withdraw into the library. [*Alice hurries into the library. The ringing is repeated. He hurries to the door.*] Either be patient or go to the devil. [*He is heard opening the door.*] Who? What? "It is I, Miss Walburga." What? I am not Miss Walburga. I am not the daughter. I am the father. Oh, it's you, Mr. Spitta! Your very humble servant. I'm only her father—only her father! What is it that you want?

[*HASSENREUTER reappears in the passage accompanied by ERICH SPITTA, a young man of twenty-one, spectacled, with keen and not undistinguished features. SPITTA passes as a student of theology and is correspondingly dressed. He does not hold himself erect*

and his development shows the influence of overstudy and under-feeding.]

Hassenreuter. Did you intend to give my daughter one of your private lessons here in my storeroom?

Spitta. I was riding past on the tram-car and I really thought I had seen Miss Walburga hurry into the doorway downstairs.

Hassenreuter. No possibility of such a thing, my dear Spitta. At this moment my daughter Walburga is attending a ritualistic service with her mother in the Anglican church.

Spitta. Then perhaps you'll forgive my intrusion. I took the liberty of coming upstairs because I thought that Miss Walburga might not find it unpleasant or useless to have an escort home through this neighbourhood.

Hassenreuter. Very good! Very excellent! But she isn't here. I regret it. I'm here myself by the merest chance—on account of the mail. And in addition, I have other pressing engagements. Can I do anything else for you?

[SPITTA polishes his glasses and betrays signs of embarrassment.]

Spitta. One doesn't grow used to the darkness at once.

Hassenreuter. Perhaps you stand in need of the tuition due you. Sorry, but unfortunately I have the habit of going out with only some small change in my waistcoat pocket. So I must ask you to have patience until I am at home again.

Spitta. Not the least hurry in the world.

Hassenreuter. Yes, it's easy for you to say that. I'm like a hunted animal, my dear fellow . . .

Spitta. And yet I would like to beg for a minute of your precious time. I can't but look upon this unexpected meeting as a kind of providential arrangement. In short: may I put a question to you?

Hassenreuter. *[With his eyes on his watch, which he has just been winding.]* One minute exactly. By the watch, my good fellow!

Spitta. Both my question and your answer need hardly take that long.

Hassenreuter. Well, then!

Spitta. Have I any talent for the stage?

Hassenreuter. For the love of God, man! Have you gone mad?—Forgive me, my dear

fellow, if a case like this excites me to the point of being discourteous. You have certainly given the lie to the saying: *natura non facit saltus* by the unnatural leap that you've taken. I must first get my breath after that! And now let's put an end to this at once. Believe me, if we were both to discuss the question now we wouldn't come to any conclusion in two or three weeks, or rather let us say years.—You are a theologian by profession, my good fellow, and you were born in a parsonage. You have all the necessary connections and a smooth road to a comfortable way of life ahead of you. How did you hit upon such a notion as this?

Spitta. That's a long story of the inner life, Mr. Hassenreuter, of difficult spiritual struggles—a story which, until this moment, has been an absolute secret and known only to myself. But my good fortune led me into your house and from that moment on I felt that I was drawing nearer and nearer to the true aim of my life.

Hassenreuter. *[Wildly impatient.]* That's very creditable to me; that does honour to my family and myself! *[He puts his hands on SPITTA's shoulders.]* And yet I must make it in the form of an urgent request that, at this moment, you refrain from a further discussion of the question. My affairs cannot wait.

Spitta. Then I will only add the expression of my absolutely firm decision.

Hassenreuter. But, my dear Spitta, who has put these mad notions into your head? I've taken real pleasure in the thought of you. I've really been quietly envying you the peaceful parsonage that was to be yours. I've attached no special significance to certain literary ambitions that one is likely to pick up in the metropolis. That's a mere phase, I thought, and will be quite passing in his case! And now you want to become an actor? God help you, were I your father! I'd lock you up on bread and water and not let you out again until the very memory of this folly was gone. *Diri!* And now, good-bye, my dear man.

Spitta. I'm afraid that locking me up or resorting to force of any kind would not help in my case at all.

Hassenreuter. But, man alive, you want to become an actor—you, with your round shoulders, with your spectacles and, above

all, with your hoarse and sharp voice. It's impossible.

Spitta. If such fellows as I exist in real life, why shouldn't they exist on the stage too? And I am of the opinion that a smooth, well-sounding voice, probably combined with the Goethe-Schiller-Weimar school of idealistic artifice, is harmful rather than helpful. The only question is whether you would take me, just as I am, as a pupil?

Hassenreuter. [*Hastily draws on his overcoat.*] I would not. In the first place my school of acting is only one of the schools of idealistic artifice which you mention. In the second place I wouldn't be responsible to your father for such an action. And in the third place, we quarrel enough as it is—every time you stay to supper at my house after giving your lessons. If you were my pupil, we'd come to blows. And now, *Spitta*, I must catch the car.

Spitta. My father is already informed. In a letter of twelve pages, I have given him a full history of the change that has taken place within me . . .

Hassenreuter. I'm sure the old gentleman will feel flattered! And now come along with me or I'll go insane!

[*HASSENREUTER* forcibly takes *SPITTA* out with him. The door is heard to slam. The room grows silent but for the uninterrupted roar of Berlin, which can now be clearly heard. The trap-door to the loft is now opened and *WALBURGA* *HASSENREUTER* clambers down in mad haste, followed by *MRS. JOHN*.]

Mrs. John. [*Whispering vehemently.*] What's the matter? Nothin' ain't happened.

Walburga. *Mrs. John*, I'll scream! I'll have to scream in another second! Oh, for heaven's sake, I can't help it much longer, *Mrs. John*!

Mrs. John. Stuff a handkerchief between your teeth! There ain't nothin'! Why d'you take on so?

Walburga. [*With chattering teeth, making every effort to suppress her sobs.*] I'm frightened! Oh, I'm frightened to death, *Mrs. John*!

Mrs. John. I'd like to know what you're so scared about!

Walburga. Why, didn't you see that horrible man?

Mrs. John. That ain't nothin' so horrible. That's my brother what sometimes helps me clean up your pa's things here.

Walburga. And that girl who sits with her back to the chimney and whines?

Mrs. John. Well, your mother didn't act no different when you was expected to come into the world.

Walburga. Oh, it's all over with me. I'll die if papa comes back.

Mrs. John. Well then hurry and get out an' don' fool roun' no more!

[*MRS. JOHN* accompanies the horrified girl along the passage, lets her out, and then returns.]

Mrs. John. Thank God, that girl don' know but what the moon is made o' cheese!

[*She takes the uncorked bottle, pours out a glass full of wine and takes it with her to the loft into which she disappears. The room is scarcely empty when HASSENREUTER returns.*]

Hassenreuter. [*Still in the door. Singing.*] "Come on down, O Madonna Teresa!" [*He calls.*] Alice! [*Still in the door.*] Come on! Help me put up my iron bar with a double lock before the door. Alice! [*He comes forward.*] Any one else who dares to interrupt our Sunday quiet—*anathema sit!* Here! You imp! Where are you, Alice? [*He observes the bottle and lifts it against the light.*] What? Half empty! The little scamp! [*From behind the door of the library a pleasant woman's voice is heard singing coloratura passages.*] Ha, ha, ha, ha! Heavens and earth! She's tipsy already.

ACT TWO

MRS. JOHN's rooms on the second floor of the same house in the attics of which *HASSENREUTER* has stored his properties. A high, deep, green-tinted room which betrays its original use as part of a barracks. The rear wall shows a double door which gives on the outer hall. Above this door there hangs a bell connected by a wire with the knob outside. To the right of the door a partition, covered with wall-paper, projects into the room. This partition takes a rectangular turn and extends to the right wall. A portion of the room is thus partitioned off and serves as sleeping-chamber. From

within the partition, which is about six feet high, cupboards are seen against the wall.

Entering the room from the hall, one observes to the left a sofa covered with oil-cloth. The back of the sofa is pushed against the partition wall. The latter is adorned with small photographs: the foreman-mason JOHN as a soldier, JOHN and his wife in their wedding garb, etc. An oval table, covered with a faded cotton cloth, stands before the sofa. In order to reach the entrance of the sleeping-chamber from the door it is necessary to pass the table and sofa. This entrance is closed by hangings of blue cotton cloth. Against the narrow front wall of the partition stands a neatly equipped kitchen cabinet. To the right, against the wall of the main room, the stove. This corner of the room serves the purposes of kitchen and pantry. Sitting on the sofa one would look straight at the left wall of the room, which is broken by two large windows. A neatly planed board has been fastened to the nearer of the windows to serve as a kind of desk. Upon it are lying blue-prints, counter-drawings, an inch-measure, a compass and a square. A small, raised platform is seen beneath the farther window. Upon it stands a small table with glasses. An old easy chair of cane and a number of simple wooden chairs complete the frugal equipment of the room, which creates an impression of neatness and orderliness such as is often found in the dwellings of childless couples.

It is about five o'clock of an afternoon toward the end of May. The warm sunlight shines through the windows.

The foreman-mason JOHN, a good-natured, bearded man of forty, sits at the desk in the foreground taking notes from the building plans.

MRS. JOHN sits sewing on the small platform by the farther window. She is very pale. There is something gentle and pain-touched about her, but her face shows an expression of deep contentment, which is broken only now and then by a momentary gleam of restlessness and suspense. A neat new perambulator stands by her side. In it lies a newborn child.

John. [Modestly.] Mother, how'd it be if I was to open the window jus' a speck an' was to light my pipe for a bit?

Mrs. John. Does you have to smoke? If not, you better let it be!

John. No, I don't has to, mother. Only I'd like to! Never mind, though. A quid'll be just as good in the end. [With comfortable circumstantiality he prepares a new quid.]

Mrs. John. [After a brief silence.] How's that? You has to go to the public registry office again?

John. That's what he told me, that I had to come back again an' tell him exackly . . . that I had to give the exack place an' time when that little kid was born.

Mrs. John. [Holding a needle in her mouth.] Well, why didn't you tell him that right away?

John. How was I to know it? I didn't know, you see.

Mrs. John. You didn't know that?

John. Well, I wasn't here, was I?

Mrs. John. You wasn't. That's right. If you goes an' leaves me here in Berlin an' stays from one year's end to another in Hamburg, an' at most comes to see me once a month—how is you to know what happens in your own home?

John. Don't you want me to go where the boss has most work for me? I goes where I c'n make good money.

Mrs. John. I wrote you in my letter as how our little boy was born in this here room.

John. I knows that an' I told him that. Ain't that natural, I axes him, that the child was born in our room? An' he says that ain't natural at all. Well then, says I, for all I cares, maybe it was up in the loft with the rats an' mice! I got mad like 'cause he said maybe the child wasn't born here at all. Then he yells at me: What kind o' talk is that? What? says I. I takes an interest in wages an' earnin' an' not in talk—not me, Mr. Registrar! An' now I'm to give him the exack day an' hour . . .

Mrs. John. An' didn't I write it all out for you on a bit o' paper?

John. When a man's mad he's forgetful. I believe if he'd up and axed me: Is you Paul John, foreman-mason? I'd ha' answered: I don't know. Well an' then I'd been a bit jolly too an' taken a drink or two with Fritz. An' while we was doin' that who comes along but Schubert an' Karl an' they says as how I has to set up on account

o' bein' a father now. Those fellers, they didn't let me go an' they was waitin' downstairs in front o' the public registry. An' so I kept thinkin' o' them standin' there. So when he axes me on what day my wife was delivered, I didn't know nothin' an' just laughed right in his face.

Mrs. John. I wish you'd first attended to what you had to an' left your drinkin' till later.

John. It's easy to say that! But if you're up to them kind o' tricks in your old age, mother, you can't blame me for bein' reel glad.

Mrs. John. All right. You go on to the registry now an' say that your child was borne by your wife in your dwellin' on the twenty-fifth o' May.

John. Wasn't it on the twenty-sixth? 'Cause I said right along the twenty-sixth. Then he must ha' noticed that I wasn't quite sober. So he says: If that's a fac', all right; if not, you gotta come back.

Mrs. John. In that case you'd better leave it as it is.

[The door is opened and SELMA KNOBBE pushes in a wretched perambulator which presents the saddest contrast to Mrs. JOHN'S. Swaddled in pitiful rags a newly born child lies therein.]

Mrs. John. Oh, no, Selma, comin' into my room with that there sick child—that was all right before. But that can't be done no more.

Selma. He just gasps with that cough o' his'n. Over at our place they smokes all the time.

Mrs. John. I told you, Selma, that you could come from time to time and get milk or bread. But while my little Adelbert is here an' c'n catch maybe consumption or somethin', you just leave that poor little thing at home with his fine mother.

Selma. *[Tearfully.]* Mother ain't been home at all yesterday or to-day. I can't get no sleep with this child. He just moans all night. I gotta get some sleep sometime! I'll jump outa the window first thing or I'll let the baby lie in the middle o' the street an' run away so no policeman can't never find me!

John. *[Looks at the strange child.]* Looks bad! Mother, why don't you try an' do somethin' for the little beggar?

Mrs. John. *[Pushing SELMA and the perambulator out determinedly.]* March outa this room. That can't be done, Paul. When you got your own you can't be lookin' out for other people's brats. That Knobbe woman c'n look after her own affairs. It's different with Selma. *[To the girl.]* You c'n come in when you want to. You c'n come in here after a while an' take a nap even. *[She closes the door.]*

John. You used to take a good deal o' interest in Knobbe's dirty little brats.

Mrs. John. You don' understan' that. I don' want our little Adelbert to be catchin' sore eyes or convulsions or somethin' like that.

John. Maybe you're right. Only, don't go an' call him Adelbert, mother. That ain't a good thing to do, to call a child by the same name as one that was carried off, unbaptised, a week after it was born. Let that be, mother. I can't stand for that, mother.

[A knocking is heard at the door.]

JOHN is about to open.]

Mrs. John. What's that?

John. Well, somebody wants to get in!

Mrs. John. *[Hastily turning the key in the lock.]* I ain't goin' to have everybody runnin' in on me now that I'm sick as this. *[She listens at the door and then calls out.]* I can't open! What d'you want?

A Woman's Voice. *[Somewhat deep and mannish in tone.]* It is Mrs. Hassenreuter.

Mrs. John. *[Surprised.]* Goodness gracious! *[She opens the door.]* I beg your pardon, Mrs. Hassenreuter! I didn't even know who it was!

[MRS. HASENREUTER has now entered, followed by WALBURGA. She is a colossal, asthmatic lady over fifty. WALBURGA is dressed with greater simplicity than in the first act. She carries a rather large package.]

Mrs. Hassenreuter. How do you do, Mrs. John? Although climbing stairs is . . . very hard for me . . . I wanted to see how everything . . . goes with you after the . . . yes, the very happy event.

Mrs. John. I'm gettin' along again kind o' half way.

Mrs. Hassenreuter. That is probably your husband, Mrs. John? Well, one must say, one is bound to say, that your dear wife, in the long time of waiting—never com-

plained, was always cheery and merry, and did her work well for my husband upstairs.

John. That's right. She was mighty glad, too.

Mrs. Hassenreuter. Well, then we'll have the pleasure—at least, your wife will have the pleasure of seeing you at home oftener than heretofore.

Mrs. John. I has a good husband, Mrs. Hassenreuter, who takes care o' me an' has good habits. An' because Paul was workin' out o' town you mustn't think there was any danger o' his leavin' me. But a man like that, where his brother has a boy o' twelve in the non-commissioned officer's school . . . it's no kind of life for him havin' no children o' his own. He gets to thinkin' queer thoughts. There he is in Hamburg, makin' good money, an' he has the chance every day and—well—then he takes a notion, maybe, he'd like to go to America.

John. Oh, that was never more'n a thought.

Mrs. John. Well, you see, with us poor people . . . it's hard-earned bread that we eats . . . an' yet . . . [*lightly she runs her hand through John's hair*] even if there's one more an' you has more cares on that account—you see how the tears is runnin' down his cheeks—well, he's mighty happy anyhow!

John. That's because three years ago we had a little feller an' when he was a week old he took sick an' died.

Mrs. Hassenreuter. My husband has already . . . yes, my husband did tell me about that . . . how deeply you grieved over that little son of yours. You know how it is . . . you know how my good husband has his eyes and his heart open to everything. And if it's a question of people who are about him or who give him their services—then everything good or bad, yes, everything good or bad that happens to them, seems just as though it had happened to himself.

Mrs. John. I mind as if it was this day how he sat in the carriage that time with the little child's coffin on his knees. He wouldn't let the gravedigger so much as touch it.

John. [*Wiping the moisture out of his eyes.*] That's the way it was. No. I couldn't let him do that.

Mrs. Hassenreuter. Just think, to-day at the dinner-table we had to drink wine—suddenly, to drink wine! Wine! For years and years the city-water in decanters has been our only table drink . . . absolutely the only one. Dear children, said my husband.—You know that he had just returned from an eleven or twelve day trip to Alsace. Let us drink, my husband said, the health of my good and faithful Mrs. John, because . . . he cried out in his beautiful voice . . . because she is a visible proof of the fact that the cry of a mother heart is not indifferent to our Lord.—And so we drank your health, clinking our glasses! Well, and here I'm bringing you at my husband's special . . . at his very special and particular order . . . an apparatus for the sterilisation of milk.—Walburga, you may unpack the boiler.

[*HASSENREUTER enters unceremoniously through the outer door which has stood ajar. He wears a top-hat, spring overcoat, carries a silver-headed cane, in a word, is gotten up in his somewhat shabby week-day outfit. He speaks hastily and almost without pauses.*]

Hassenreuter. [*Wiping the sweat from his forehead.*] Berlin is hot, ladies and gentlemen, hot! And the cholera is as near as St. Petersburg! Now you've complained to my pupils, Spitta and Käferstein, Mrs. John, that your little one doesn't seem to gain in weight. Now, of course, it's one of the symptoms of the general decadence of our age that the majority of mothers are either unwilling to nurse their offspring or incapable of it. But you've already lost one child on account of diarrhoea, Mrs. John. No, there's no help for it: we must call a spade a spade. And so, in order that you do not meet with the same misfortune over again, or fall into the hands of old women whose advice is usually quite deadly for an infant—in order that these things may not happen, I say, I have caused my wife to bring you this apparatus. I've brought up all my children, Walburga included, by the help of such an apparatus . . . Aha! So one gets a glimpse of you again, Mr. John! Bravo! The emperor needs soldiers, and you needed a representative of your race! So I congratulate you

with all my heart. [*He shakes JOHN's hand vigorously.*]

Mrs. Hassenreuter. [*Leaning over the infant.*] How much . . . how much did he weigh at birth?

Mrs. John. He weighed exactly eight pounds and ten ounces.

Hassenreuter. [*With noisy joviality.*] Ha, ha, ha! A vigorous product, I must say! Eight pounds and ten ounces of good healthy, German national flesh!

Mrs. Hassenreuter. Look at his eyes! And his little nose! His father over again! Why, the little fellow is really, really, the very image of you, Mr. John.

Hassenreuter. I trust that you will have the boy received into the communion of the Christian Church.

Mrs. John. [*With happy impressiveness.*] Oh, he'll be christened properly, right in the parochial church at the font by a clergyman.

Hassenreuter. Right! And what are his baptismal names to be?

Mrs. John. Well, you know the way men is. That's caused a lot o' talk. I was thinkin' o' "Bruno," but he won't have it!

Hassenreuter. Surely Bruno isn't a bad name.

John. That may be. I ain't sayin' but what Bruno is a good enough name. I don't want to give no opinion about that.

Mrs. John. Why don't you say as how I has a brother what's twelve years younger'n me an' what don't always do just right? But that's only 'cause there's so much temptation. That boy's a good boy. Only you won't believe it.

John. [*Turns red with sudden rage.*] Jette . . . you know what a cross that feller was to us! What d'you want? You want our little feller to be the namesake of a man what's—I can't help sayin' it—what's under police soopervision?

Hassenreuter. Then, for heaven's sake, get him some other patron saint.

John. Lord protect me from sich! I tried to take an interest in Bruno! I got him a job in a machine-shop an' didn't get nothin' outa it but annoyance an' disgrace! God forbid that he should come aroun' an' have anythin' to do with this little feller o' mine. [*He clenches his fist.*] If that was to happen, Jette, I wouldn't be responsible for myself!

Mrs. John. You needn't go on, Paul! Bruno ain't comin'. But I c'n tell you this much for certain, that my brother was good an' helpful to me in this hard time.

John. Why didn't you send for me?

Mrs. John. I didn't want no man aroun' that was scared.

Hassenreuter. Aren't you an admirer of Bismarck, John?

John. [*Scratching the back of his head.*] I can't say as to that exackly. My brothers in the masons' union, though, they ain't admirers o' him.

Hassenreuter. Then you have no German hearts in your bodies! Otto is what I called my eldest son who is in the imperial navy! And believe me [*pointing to the infant*] this coming generation will well know what it owes to that mighty hero, the great forger of German unity! [*He takes the tin boiler of the apparatus which WALBURGA has unpacked into his hands and lifts it high up.*] Now then: the whole business of this apparatus is mere child's play. This frame which holds all the bottles—each bottle to be filled two-thirds with water and one-third with milk—is sunk into the boiler which is filled with boiling water. By keeping the water at the boiling-point for an hour and a half in this manner, the content of the bottles becomes free of germs. Chemists call this process sterilisation.

John. Jette, at the master-mason's house, the milk that's fed to the twins is sterilised too.

[*The pupils of HASENREUTER, KÄFERSTEIN and DR. KEGEL, two young men between twenty and twenty-five years of age, have knocked at the door and then opened it.*]

Hassenreuter. [*Noticing his pupils.*] Patience, gentlemen. I'll be with you directly. At the moment I am busying myself with the problems of the nourishment of infants and the care of children.

Käferstein. [*His head bears witness to a sharply defined character: large nose, pale, a serious expression, beardless; about the mouth a flicker of kindly mischievousness. With hollow voice, gentle and suppressed.*] You must know that we are the three kings out of the East.

Hassenreuter. [Who still holds the apparatus aloft in his hands.] What are you?

Käferstein. [As before.] We want to adore the babe.

Hassenreuter. Ha, ha, ha, ha! If you are the kings out of the East, gentlemen, it seems to me that the third of you is lacking.

Käferstein. The third is our new fellow pupil in the field of dramaturgic activity, the *studiosus theologiae*, who is detained at present at the corner of Blumen and Wallnertheater streets by an accident partly sociological, partly psychological in its nature.

Dr. Kegel. We made all possible haste to escape.

Hassenreuter. Do you see, a star stands above this house, Mrs. John! But do tell me, has our excellent Spitta once more made some public application of his quackery for the healing of the so-called sins of the social order? Ha, ha, ha, ha! *Semper idem!* Why, that fellow is actually becoming a nuisance!

Käferstein. A crowd gathered in the street for some reason and it seems that he discovered a friend in the midst of it.

Hassenreuter. According to my unauthoritative opinion this young Spitta would have done much better as a surgeon's assistant or Salvation Army officer. But that's the way of the world: the fellow must needs want to be an actor.

Mrs. Hassenreuter. Mr. Spitta, the children's tutor, wants to become an actor?

Hassenreuter. That is exactly the plan he has proposed to me, mama.—But now, if you bring incense and myrrh, dear Käferstein, out with them! You observe what a many sided man your teacher is. Now I help my pupils, thirsty after the contents of the Muses' breasts, to the nourishment they desire—*nutrimentum spiritus*—again I . . .

Käferstein. [Rattles a toy bank.] Well, I deposit this offering, which is a fire-proof bank, next to the perambulator of this excellent offspring of the mason, with the wish that he will rise to be at least a royal architect.

John. [Having put cordial glasses on the table, he fetches and opens a fresh bottle.] Well, now I'm goin' to uncork the *Danziger Goldwasser*.

Hassenreuter. To him who hath shall be given, as you observe, Mrs. John.

John. [Filling the glasses.] Nobody ain't goin' to say that my child's unprovided for, gentlemen. But I takes it very kindly o' you, gentlemen! [All except MRS. HASENREUTER and WALBURGA lift up their glasses.] To your health! Come on, mother, we'll drink together too.

[The action follows the words.]

Hassenreuter. [In a tone of reproof.] Mama, you must, of course, drink with us.

John. [Having drunk, with jolly expansiveness.] I ain't goin' to Hamburg no more now. The boss c'n send some other feller there. I been quarrelin' with him about that these three days. I gotta take up my hat right now an' go there; he axed me to come roun' to his office again at six. If he don' want to give in, he needn't. It won't never do for the father of a family to be forever an' a day away from his family . . . I got a friend—why, all I gotta do's to say the word 'n I c'n get work on the layin' o' the foundations o' the new houses o' Parliament. Twelve years I been workin' for this same boss! I c'n afford to make a change some time.

Hassenreuter. [Pats John's shoulder.] Quite of your opinion, quite! Our family life is something that neither money nor kind words can buy of us.

[ERICH SPITTA enters. His hat is soiled; his clothes show traces of mud. His tie is gone. He looks pale and excited and is busy wiping his hands with his handkerchief.]

Spitta. Beg pardon, but I wonder if I could brush up here a little, Mrs. John?

Hassenreuter. Ha, ha, ha! For heaven's sake, what have you been up to, my good Spitta?

Spitta. I only escorted a lady home, Mr. Hassenreuter—nothing else!

Hassenreuter. [Who has joined in the general outburst of laughter called forth by SPITTA's explanation.] Well now, listen here! You blandly say: Nothing else! And you announce it publicly here before all these people?

Spitta. [In consternation.] Why not? The lady in question was very well dressed; I've often seen her on the stairs of this

house, and she unfortunately met with an accident on the street.

Hassenreuter. You don't say so? Tell us about it, dear Spitta! Apparently the lady inflicted spots on your clothes and scratches on your hands.

Spitta. Oh, no. That was probably the fault of the mob. The lady had an attack of some kind. The policeman caught hold of her so awkwardly that she slipped down in the middle of the street immediately in front of two omnibus horses. I simply couldn't bear to see that, although I admit that the function of the Good Samaritan is, as a rule, beneath the dignity of well-dressed people on the public streets.

[*MRS. JOHN wheels the perambulator behind the partition and reappears with a basin full of water, which she places on a chair.*]

Hassenreuter. Did the lady, by any chance, belong to that international high society which we either regulate or segregate?

Spitta. I confess that that was quite as indifferent to me in the given instance, as it was to one of the omnibus horses who held his left fore foot suspended in the air for five, six or, perhaps, even eight solid minutes, in order not to trample on the woman who lay immediately beneath it. [*SPITTA is answered by a round of laughter.*] You may laugh! The behaviour of the horse didn't strike me as in the least ludicrous. I could well understand how some people applauded him, clapped their hands, and how others stormed a bakery to buy buns with which to feed him.

Mrs. John. [*Fanatically.*] I wish he'd trampled all he could! [*MRS. JOHN'S remark calls forth another outburst of laughter.*] An' anyhow! That there Knobbe woman! She oughta be put in some public place, that she ought, publicly strapped to a bench an' then beaten—beaten—that's what! She oughta have the stick taken to her so the blood jus' spurts!

Spitta. Exactly. I've never been deduced into thinking that the so-called Middle Ages were quite over and done with. It isn't so long ago, in the year eighteen hundred and thirty-seven, as a matter of fact, that a widow named Mayer was publicly broken on the wheel right here in the

city of Berlin on Hausvogtei Square.—[*He displays fragments of the lenses of his spectacles.*] By the way, I must hurry to the optician at once.

John. [*To SPITTA.*] You must excuse us. But didn't you take that there fine lady home on this very floor across the way? Aha! Well, mother she noticed it right off that that couldn't ha' been nobody but that Knobbe woman what's known for sendin' girls o' twelve out on the streets! Then she stays away herself an' swills liquor an' has all kinds o' dealin's an' takes no care o' her own children. Then when she's been drunk an' wakes up she beats 'em with her fists an' with an umbrella.

Hassenreuter. [*Pulling himself together and bethinking himself.*] Hurry, gentlemen! We must proceed to our period of instruction. We're fifteen minutes behind hand as it is and our time is limited. We must close the period quite punctually to-day. I'm sorry. Come, mama. See you later, ladies and gentlemen.

[*HASSENREUTER offers his arm to his wife and leaves the room, followed by KÄFERSTEIN and DR. KEGEL. JOHN also picks up his slouch hat.*]

John. [*To his wife.*] Good-bye. I gotta go an' see the boss. [*He also leaves.*]

Spitta. Could you possibly lend me a tie?

Mrs. John. I'll see what c'n be found in Paul's drawer. [*She opens the drawer of the table and turns pale.*] O Lord! [*She takes from the drawer a lock of child's hair held together by a ribband.*] I found a bit of lock o' hair here that was cut off the head of our little Adelbert by his father when he was lyin' in the coffin. [*A profound, grief-stricken sadness suddenly comes over her face, which gives way again, quite as suddenly, to a gleam of triumph.*] An' now the crib is full again after all! [*With an expression of strange joyfulness, the lock of hair in her hand, she leads the young people to the door of the partition through which the perambulator projects into the main room by two-thirds of its length. Arrived there she holds the lock of hair close to the head of the living child.*] Come on! Come on here! [*With a strangely mysterious air she beckons to WALBURGA and SPITTA, who take up their stand next to*

her and to the child.] Now look at that there hair an' at this! Ain't it the same? Wouldn't you say it was the same identical hair?

Spitta. Quite right. It's the same to the minutest shade, Mrs. John.

Mrs. John. All right! That's all right! That's what I wanted to know. [*Together with the child she disappears behind the partition.*]

Walburga. Doesn't it strike you, Erich, that Mrs. John's behaviour is rather peculiar?

Spitta. [*Taking WALBURGA's hands and kissing them shyly but passionately.*] I don't know, I don't know . . . Or, at least, my opinion mustn't count to-day. The sombre state of my own mind colours all the world. Did you get the letter?

Walburga. Yes. But I couldn't make out why you hadn't been at our house in such a long while.

Spitta. Forgive me, Walburga, but I couldn't come.

Walburga. And why not?

Spitta. Because my mind was not at one with itself.

Walburga. You want to become an actor? Is that true? You're going to change professions?

Spitta. What I'll be in the end may be left to God. But never a parson—never a country parson!

Walburga. Listen! I've had my fortune told from the cards.

Spitta. That's nonsense, Walburga. You mustn't do that.

Walburga. I swear to you, Erich, that it isn't nonsense. The woman told me I was betrothed in secret and that my betrothed is an actor. Of course I laughed her to scorn. And immediately after that mama told me that you wanted to be an actor.

Spitta. Is that a fact?

Walburga. It's true—every bit of it. And in addition the clairvoyant said that we would have a visitor who would cause us much trouble.

Spitta. My father is coming to Berlin, Walburga, and it's undoubtedly true that the old gentleman will give us not a little trouble. Father doesn't know it, but my views and his have been worlds asunder for a long time. It didn't need these letters of his which seem actually to burn in

my pocket and by which he answered my confession—it didn't need these letters to tell me that.

Walburga. An evil, envious, venomous star presided over our secret meeting here! Oh, how I used to admire my papa! And since that Sunday I blush for him every minute. And however much I try, I can't, since that day, look frankly and openly into his eyes.

Spitta. Did you have differences with your father too?

Walburga. Oh, if it were nothing more than that! I was so proud of papa! And now I tremble to think of even your finding it out. You'd despise us!

Spitta. I despise anyone? Dear child, I can't think of anything less fitting for me! Look here: I'll set you an example in the matter of frankness. A sister of mine, six years older than I, was governess in a noble family. Well, a misfortune happened to her and . . . when she sought refuge in the house of her parents, my Christian father put her out of doors! I believe he thought that Jesus would have done the same. And so my sister gradually sank lower and lower and some day we can go and visit her in the little suicides' graveyard near Schildhorn where she finally found rest.

Walburga. [*Puts her arms around SPITTA.*] Poor boy, you never told me a word of that.

Spitta. Circumstances have changed now and I speak of it. I shall speak of it to papa too even if it causes a breach between us.—You're always surprised when I get excited, and that I can't control myself when I see some poor devil being kicked about, or when I see the rabble mistreating some poor fallen girl. I have actual hallucinations sometimes. I seem to see ghosts in bright daylight and my own sister among them!

[*PAULINE PIPERCARCKA enters, dressed as before. Her little face seems to have grown paler and prettier.*]

Pauline. Good mornin'.

Mrs. John. [*From behind the partition.*] Who's that out there?

Pauline. Pauline, Mrs. John.

Mrs. John. Pauline? I don't know no Pauline.

Pauline. Pauline Piperarccka, Mrs. John.

Mrs. John. Who? Oh, well then you c'n wait a minute, Pauline.

Walburga. Good-bye, Mrs. John.

Mrs. John. [*Emerges from behind the partition and carefully draws the hangings.*] That's right. I got somethin' to discuss with this here young person. So you young folks c'n see about getting out.

[*SPITTA and WALBURGA leave hastily.* *MRS. JOHN locks the door behind them.*]

Mrs. John. So it's you, Pauline? An' what is it you want?

Pauline. What should I be wantin'? Somethin' jus' drove me here! Couldn't wait no longer. I has to see how everythin' goes.

Mrs. John. How what goes? What's everythin'?

Pauline. [*With a somewhat bad conscience.*] Well, if it's well; if it's gettin' on nicely.

Mrs. John. If what's well? If what's gettin' on nicely?

Pauline. You oughta know that without my tellin'.

Mrs. John. What ought I to know without your tellin' me?

Pauline. I wants to know if anythin's happened to the child!

Mrs. John. What child? An' what could ha' happened? Talk plainly, will you? There ain't a word o' your crazy chatter that anybody c'n understand!

Pauline. I ain't sayin' nothin' but what's true, Mrs. John.

Mrs. John. Well, what is it?

Pauline. My child . . .

Mrs. John. [*Gives her a terrific box on the ear.*] Say that again an' I'll bang my boots about your ears so that you'll think you're the mother o' triplets. An' now: get outa here! An' don' never dare to show your face here again!

Pauline. [*Starts to go. She shakes the door which is locked.*] She's beaten me! Help! Help! I don' has to stand that! No! [*Weeping.*] Open the door! She's maltreated me, Mrs. John has!

Mrs. John. [*Utterly transformed, embraces PAULINE, thus restraining her.*] Pauline! For God's sake, Pauline! I don' know what could ha' gotten into me! You jus' be good now an' quiet down an' I'll

beg your pardon. What d'you want me to do? I'll get down on my knees if you wants me to! Anythin'? Pauline! Listen! Let me do somethin'!

Pauline. Why d'you go 'n hit me in the face? I'm goin' to headquarters and say as how you slapped me in the face. I'm goin' to headquarters to give notice!

Mrs. John. [*Thrusts her face forward.*] Here! You c'n hit me back—right in the face! Then it's all right; then it's evened up.

Pauline. I'm goin' to headquarters . . .

Mrs. John. Yes, then it's evened up. You jus' listen to what I says: Don't you see it'll be evened up then all right! What d'you want to do? Come on now an' hit me!

Pauline. What's the good o' that when my cheek is swollen?

Mrs. John. [*Striking herself a blow on the cheek.*] There! Now my cheek is swollen too. Come on, my girl, hit me an' don' be scared!—An' then you c'n tell me everythin' you got on your heart. In the meantime I'll go an' I'll cook for you an' me, Miss Pauline, a good cup o' reel coffee made o' beans—none o' your chicory slop, so help me!

Pauline. [*Somewhat conciliated.*] Why did you has to go an' be so mean an' rough to a poor girl like me, Mrs. John?

Mrs. John. That's it—that's jus' what I'd like to know my own self! Come on, Pauline, an' sit down! So! It's all right, I tells you! Sit down! It's fine o' you to come an' see me! How many beatin's didn't I get from my poor mother because sometimes I jus' seemed to go crazy an' not be the same person no more. She said to me more'n onct: Lass, look out! You'll be doin' for yourself some day! An' maybe she was right; maybe it'll be that way. Well now, Pauline, tell me how you are an' how you're gettin' along?

Pauline. [*Laying down bank-notes and handfuls of silver, without counting them, on the table.*] Here is the money: I don't need it.

Mrs. John. I don' know nothin' about no money, Pauline.

Pauline. Oh, you'll know about the money all right! It's been jus' burnin' into me, that it has! It was like a snake under my pillow . . .

Mrs. John. Oh, come now . . .

Pauline. Like a snake that crept out when I went to sleep. An' it tormented me an' wound itself aroun' me an' squeezed me so that I screamed right out an' my landlady found me lyin' on the bare floor jus' like somebody what's dead.

Mrs. John. You jus' let that be right now, Pauline. Take a bit of a drink first of all! [*She pours out a small glassful of brandy.*] An' then come an' eat a bite. It was my husband's birthday yesterday. [*She gets out some coffee-cake of which she cuts an oblong piece.*]

Pauline. Oh, no, I don't feel like eatin'.

Mrs. John. That strengthens you; that does you good; you oughta eat that! But I is pleased to see, Pauline, how your fine constitootion helped you get back your strength so good.

Pauline. But now I want to have a look at it, Mrs. John.

Mrs. John. What's that? What d'you want to have a look at?

Pauline. If I could ha' walked I'd ha' been here long ago. I want to see now what I come to see!

[*MRS. JOHN, whose almost creeping courtesies have been uttered with lips aquiver with fear, pales ominously and keeps silent. She goes to the kitchen cabinet, wrenches the coffee handmill out and pours beans into it. She sits down, squeezes the mill between her knees, grasps the handle, and stares with a consuming expression of nameless hatred over at PAULINE.*]

Mrs. John. Eh? Oh, yes! What d'you want to see? What d'you want to see now all of a sudden? That what you wanted to throttle with them two hands o' yours, eh?

Pauline. Me?

Mrs. John. D'you want to lie about it? I'll go and give notice about you!

Pauline. Now you've tormented me an' jabbed at me an' tortured me enough, Mrs. John. You followed me up; you wouldn't leave me no rest where I went. Till I brought my child into the world on a heap o' rags up in your loft. You gave me all kinds o' hopes an' you scared me with that rascal of a feller up there! You

told my fortune for me outa the cards about my intended an' you baited me an' hounded me till I was most crazy.

Mrs. John. An' that's what you are. Yes, you're as crazy as you c'n be. I tormented you, eh? Is that what I did? I picked you up outa the gutter! I fetched you outa the midst of a blizzard when you was standin' by the chronometer an' stared at the lamplighter with eyes that was that desperate scared! You oughta seen yourself! An' I hounded you, eh? Yes, to prevent the police an' the police-waggon an' the devil hisself from catchin' you! I left you no rest, eh? I tortured you, did I? to keep you from jumpin' into the river with the child in your womb! [*Mocking her.*] "I'll throw myself into the canal, mother John! I'll choke the child to death! I'll kill the little crittur with my hat pin! I'll go an' run to where its father plays the zither, right in the midst o' the saloon, an' I'll throw the dead child at his feet!" That's what you said; that's the way you talked—all the blessed day long and sometimes half the night too till I put you to bed an' petted you an' stroked you till you went to sleep. An' you didn't wake up again till next day on the stroke o' twelve, when the bells was ringin' from all the churches. Yes, that's the way I scared you, an' then gave you hope again, an' didn't give you no peace! You forgot all that there, eh?

Pauline. But it's my child, Mrs. John . . .

Mrs. John. [*Screams.*] You go an' get your child outa the canal! [*She jumps up and walks hastily about the room, picking up and throwing aside one object after another.*]

Pauline. Ain't I goin' to be allowed to see my child even?

Mrs. John. Jump into the water an' get it there! Then you'll have it! I ain't keepin' you back. God knows!

Pauline. All right! You c'n slap me, you c'n beat me, you c'n throw things at my head if you wants to. Before I don't know where my child is an' before I ain't seen it with my own eyes, nothin' an' nobody ain't goin' to get me away from this place.

Mrs. John. [*Interrupting her.*] Pauline, I put it out to nurse!

Pauline. That's a lie! Don't I hear it

smackin' its lips right behind that there partition. [*The child behind the partition begins to cry.* PAULINE hastens toward it. *She exclaims with pathetic tearfulness, obviously forcing the note of motherhood a little.*] Don' you cry, my poor, poor little boy! Little mother's comin' to you now!

[MRS. JOHN, almost beside herself, has sprung in front of the door, thus blocking PAULINE's way.]

Pauline. [*Whining helplessly but with clenched fists.*] Lemme go in an' see my child!

Mrs. John. [*A terrible change coming over her face.*] Look at me, girl! Come here an' look me in the eye!—D'you think you c'n play tricks on a woman that looks the way I do? [PAULINE sits down still moaning.] Sit down an' howl an' whine till . . . till your throat's swollen so you can't give a groan. But if you gets in here—then you'll be dead or I'll be dead an' the child—he won't be alive no more neither.

Pauline. [*Rises with some determination.*] Then look out for what'll happen.

Mrs. John. [*Attempting to pacify the girl once more.*] Pauline, this business was all settled between us. Why d'you want to go an' burden yourself with the child what's my child now an' is in the best hands possible? What d'you want to do with it? Why don't you go to your intended? You two'll have somethin' better to do than listen to a child cryin' an' takin' all the care an' trouble he needs!

Pauline. No, that ain't the way it is! He's gotta marry me now! They all says so—Mrs. Kielbacke, when I had to take treatment, she said so. They says I'm not to give in; he has to marry me. An' the registrar he advised me too. That's what he said an' he was mad, too, when I told him how I sneaked up into a loft to have my baby! He cried out loud that I wasn't to let up! Poor, maltreated crittur—that's what he called me an' he put his hand in his pocket an' gave me three crowns! All right. So we needn't quarrel no more, Mrs. John. I jus' come anyhow to tell you to be at home to-morrow afternoon at five o'clock. An' why? Because to-morrow an official examiner'll come to look after things here. I don't has to worry myself with you no more . . .

Mrs. John. [*Moveless and shocked beyond expression.*] What? You went an' give notice at the public registry?

Pauline. O' course? Does I want to go to gaol?

Mrs. John. An' what did you tell the registrar?

Pauline. Nothin' but that I give birth to a boy. An' I was so ashamed! Oh my God, I got red all over! I thought I'd just have to go through the floor.

Mrs. John. Is that so? Well, if you was so ashamed why did you go an' give notice?

Pauline. 'Cause my landlady an' Mrs. Kielbacke, too, what took me there, didn't give me no rest.

Mrs. John. H-m. So they knows it now at the public registry?

Pauline. Yes; they had to know, Mrs. John!

Mrs. John. Didn't I tell you over an' over again?

Pauline. You gotta give notice o' that! D'you want me to be put in gaol for a investergation?

Mrs. John. I told you as how I'd give notice.

Pauline. I axed the registrar right off. Nobody hadn't been there.

Mrs. John. An' what did you say exactly?

Pauline. That his name was to be Aloysius Theophil an' that he was boardin' with you.

Mrs. John. An' to-morrow an officer'll be comin' in.

Pauline. He's a gentleman from the guardian's office. What's the matter with that? Why don't you keep still an' act sensible. You scared me most to death a while ago!

Mrs. John. [*As if absent-minded.*] That's right. There ain't nothin' to be done about that now. An' there ain't so much to that, after all, maybe.

Pauline. All right. An' now c'n I see my child, Mrs. John?

Mrs. John. Not to-day. Wait till to-morrow, Pauline.

Pauline. Why not to-day?

Mrs. John. Because no good'd come of it this day. Wait till to-morrow, five o'clock in the afternoon.

Pauline. That's it. My landlady says it was written that way, that a gentlemen

from the city'll be here to-morrow afternoon five o'clock.

Mrs. John. [*Pushing PAULINE out and herself going out of the room with her, in the same detached tone.*] All right. Let him come, girl.

[*MRS. JOHN has gone out into the hall for a moment. She now returns without PAULINE. She seems strangely changed and absent-minded. She takes a few hasty steps toward the door of the partition; then stands still with an expression of fruitless brooding on her face. She interrupts herself in this brooding and runs to the window. Having reached it she turns and on her face there reappears the expression of dull detachment. Slowly, like a somnambulist, she walks up to the table and sits down beside it, leaning her chin on her hand. SELMA KNOBBE appears in the doorway.*]

Selma. Mother's asleep, Mrs. John, an' I'm that hungry. Might I have a bite o' bread?

[*MRS. JOHN rises mechanically and cuts a slice from the loaf of bread with the air of one under an hypnotic influence.*]

Selma. [*Observing MRS. JOHN's state of mind.*] It's me! What's the matter, Mrs. John? Whatever you do, don't cut yourself with the bread knife.

Mrs. John. [*Lets the loaf and the bread-knife slip involuntarily from her hand to the table. A dry sobbing overwhelms her more and more.*] Fear!—Trouble!—You don't know nothin' about that! [*She trembles and grasps after some support.*]

ACT THREE

The same decoration as in the first act. The lamp is lit. The dim light of a hanging lamp illuminates the passage.

HASSENREUTER is giving his three pupils, SPITTA, DR. KEGEL and KÄFERSTEIN instruction in the art of acting. He himself is seated at the table, uninterruptedly opening letters and beating time to the rhythm of the verses with a paper cutter. In front of him stand, facing each other, KEGEL and

KÄFERSTEIN on one side, SPITTA on the other, thus representing the two choruses in Schiller's "Bride of Messina." The young men stand in the midst of a diagram drawn with chalk on the floor and separated, like a chess-board, into sixty-four rectangles. On the high stool in front of the office desk WALBURGA is sitting. Waiting in the background stands the house steward QUARARO, who might be the manager of a wandering circus and, in the capacity of athlete, its main attraction. His speech is uttered in a guttural tenor. He wears bedroom slippers. His breeches are held up by an embroidered belt. An open shirt, fairly clean, a light jacket, a cap now held in his hand, complete his attire.

Dr. Kegel and Käferstein. [*Mouthing the verses sonorously and with exaggerated dignity.*]

"Thee salute I with reverence,
Lordliest chamber,
Thee, my high rulers'
Princeliest cradle,
Column-supported, magnificent roof.
Deep in its scabbard . . ."

Hassenreuter. [*Cries in a rage.*] Pause! Period! Period! Pause! Period! You're not turning the crank of a hurdy-gurdy! The chorus in the "Bride of Messina" is no hand-organ tune! "Thee salute I with reverence!" Start over again from the beginning, gentlemen! "Thee salute I with reverence, Lordliest chamber!" Something like that, gentlemen! "Deep in its scabbard let the sword rest." Period! "Magnificent roof." I meant to say: Period! But you may go on if you want to.

Dr. Kegel and Käferstein.

"Deep in its scabbard
Let the sword rest
Fettered fast by your gateway
Moveless may lie Strife's snaky-locked monster.

For . . ."

Hassenreuter. [*As before.*] Hold on! Don't you know the meaning of a full stop, gentlemen? Haven't you any knowledge of the elements? "Snaky-haired monster." Period! Imagine that a pile is driven there! You've got to stop, to pause. There must be silence like the silence of the dead! You've got to imagine yourself wiped out of existence for the moment,

Käferstein. And then—out with your best trumpeting chest-notes! Hold on! Don't lisp, for God's sake. "For . . ." Go on now! Start!

Dr. Kegel and Käferstein.

"For this hospitable house's

Inviolable threshold

Guardeth an oath, the Furies' child . . ."

Hassenreuter. [Jumps up, and runs about and roars.] Oath, oath, oath, oath!!! Don't you know what an oath is, Käferstein? "Guardeth an oath!!!—the Furies' child." This oath is said to be the child of the Furies, Dr. Kegel! You've got to use your voice! The audience, to the last usher, has got to be one vast quivering gooseflesh when you say that! One shiver must run through every bone in the house! Listen to me: "For this house's . . . threshold Guardeth an oath!!! The Furies' child, The fearfullest of the infernal deities!"—Go ahead! Don't repeat these verses. But you can stop long enough to observe that an oath and a Munich beer radish are, after all, two different things.

Spitta. [Declaims.]

"Ireful my heart in my bossom burneth . . ."

Hassenreuter. Hold on! [*He runs up to SPITTA and pushes and nudges the latter's arms and legs in order to produce the desired tragic pose.*]—First of all, you lack the requisite statuesqueness of posture, my dear Spitta. The dignity of a tragic character is in nowise expressed in you. Then you did not, as I expressly desired you to do, advance your right foot from the field marked ID into that marked IIC! Finally, Mr. Quaquaro is waiting; so let us interrupt ourselves for a moment. So; now I'm at your service, Mr. Quaquaro. That is to say, I asked you to come up because, in making my inventory, it became clear that several cases and boxes cannot be found or, in other words, have been stolen. Now, before lodging information with the authorities which, of course, I am determined to do, I wanted first to get your advice. I wanted to do that all the more because, in place of the lost cases, there was found, in a corner of the attic, a very peculiar mess—a find that could appropriately be sent to Dr. Virchow. First there was a blue feather-duster, truly prehistoric, and an in-

expressible vessel, the use of which, quite harmless in itself, is equally inexpressible.

Quaquaro. Well, sir, I can climb up there if you want me to.

Hassenreuter. Suppose you do that. Up there you'll meet Mrs. John, whom the find in question has disquieted even more than it has me. These three gentlemen, who are my pupils, won't be persuaded that something very like a murder didn't take place up there. But, if you please, let's not cause a scandal!

Käferstein. When something got lost in my mother's shop in Schneidemühl, it was always said that the rats had eaten it. And really, when you consider the number of rats and mice in this house—I very nearly stepped on one on the stairs a while ago—why shouldn't we suppose that the cases of costumes were devoured in the same way. Silk is said to be sweet.

Hassenreuter. Very excellent! Very good! You're relieved from the necessity of indulging in any more notion-shopkeepers' fancies, my good Käferstein! Ha, ha, ha! It only remains for you to dish up for us the story of the cavalry man Sorgenfrei, who, according to your assertion, when this house was still a cavalry barracks, hanged himself—spurred and armed—in my loft. And then the last straw would be for you to direct our suspicions toward him.

Käferstein. You can still see the very nail he used.

Quaquaro. There ain't a soul in the house what don't know the story of the soldier Sorgenfrei who put an end to hisself with a rope somewhere under the roof-tree.

Käferstein. The carpenter's wife downstairs and a seamstress in the second story have repeatedly seen him by broad daylight nodding out of the attic window and bowing down with military demeanour.

Quaquaro. A corporal, they says, called the soldier Sorgenfrei a windbag an' gave him a blow outa spite. An' the idjit took that to heart.

Hassenreuter. Ha, ha, ha! Military brutalities and ghost stories! That mixture is original, but hardly to our purpose. I assume that the theft, or whatever it was, took place during those eleven or twelve days that I spent on business in Alsace.

So look the matter over and have the goodness, later, to report to me.

[HASSENREUTER turns to his pupils. QUAAQUARO mounts the stars to the loft and disappears behind the trap-door.]

Hassenreuter. All right, my good Spitta: Fire away!

[SPITTA recites simply according to the sense and without any tragic bombast.]

"Ireful my heart in my bosom burneth,
My hand is ready for sword or lance,
For unto me the Gorgon turneth
My foeman's hateful countenance.
Scarce I master the rage that assails me.
Shall I salute him with fair speech?
Better, perchance, my ire avails me?
Only the Fury me affrighteth,
Protectress of all within her reach,
And God's truce which all foes uniteth."

Hassenreuter. [Who has sat down, supports his head on his hand and listens resignedly. Not until SPITTA has ceased speaking for some moments does he look up, as if coming to himself.] Are you quite through, Spitta? If so, I'm much obliged!—You see, my dear fellow, I've really gotten into a deuce of a situation as far as you are concerned: either I tell you impudently to your face that I consider your method of elocution excellent—and in that case I'd be guilty of a lie of the most contemptible kind; or else I tell you that I consider it abominable and then we'd get into another beastly row.

Spitta. [Turning pale.] Yes, all this stilted, rhetorical stuff is quite foreign to my nature. That's the very reason why I abandoned theology. The preacher's tone is repulsive to me.

Hassenreuter. And so you would like to reel off these tragic choruses as a clerk of court mumbles a document or a waiter a bill of fare?

Spitta. I don't care for the whole sonorous bombast of the "Bride of Messina."

Hassenreuter. I wish you'd repeat that charming opinion.

Spitta. There's nothing to be done about it, sir. Our conceptions of dramatic art diverge utterly, in some respects.

Hassenreuter. Man alive, at this particular moment your face is a veritable monogram of megalomania and impudence! I beg your pardon, but you're my pupil now

and no longer the tutor of my children. Your views and mine! You ridiculous tyro! You and Schiller! Friedrich Schiller! I've told you a hundred times that your puerile little views of art are nothing but an innate striving toward imbecility!

Spitta. You would have to prove that to me, after all.

Hassenreuter. You prove it yourself every time you open your mouth! You deny the whole art of elocution, the value of the voice in acting! You want to substitute for both the art of toneless squeaking! Further you deny the importance of action in the drama and assert it to be a worthless accident, a sop for the groundlings! You deny the validity of poetic justice, of guilt and its necessary expiation. You call all that a vulgar invention—an assertion by means of which the whole moral order of the world is abrogated by the learned and crooked understanding of your single magnificent self! Of the heights of humanity you know nothing! You asserted the other day that, in certain circumstances, a barber or a scrubwoman might as fittingly be the protagonist of a tragedy as Lady Macbeth or King Lear!

Spitta. [Still pale, polishing his spectacles.] Before art as before the law all men are equal, sir.

Hassenreuter. Aha? Is that so? Where did you pick up that banality?

Spitta. [Without permitting himself to be disconcerted.] The truth of that saying has become my second nature. In believing it I probably find myself at variance with Schiller and Gustav Freytag, but not at all with Lessing and Diderot. I have spent the past two semesters in the study of these two great dramaturgic critics, and the whole stilted French pseudo-classicism is, as far as I'm concerned, utterly destroyed—not only in creative art itself but in such manifestations as the boundless folly of the directions for acting which Goethe prescribed in his old age. These are mere superannuated nonsense.

Hassenreuter. You don't mean it?

Spitta. And if the German stage is ever to recuperate it must go back to the young Schiller, the young Goethe—the author of "Götz"—and ever again to Gotthold Ephraim Lessing! There you will find set down principles of dramatic art which are

adapted to the rich complexity of life in all its fullness, and which are potent to cope with Nature itself!

Hassenreuter. Walburga! I'm afraid Mr. Spitta is taking us for each other. Mr. Spitta, you're about to give a lesson! Walburga, you and your teacher are free to retire to the library.—If human arrogance and especially that of very young people could be crystallised into one formation—humanity would be buried under that rock like an ant under the granite masses of an antediluvian mountain range!

Spitta. But I wouldn't in any wise be refuted thereby.

Hassenreuter. Man, I tell you that I've not only passed through two semesters of formal study, but I have grown grey in the practice of the actor's art! And I tell you that Goethe's catechism for actors is the alpha and the omega of my artistic convictions! If you don't like that—get another teacher!

Spitta. [*Pursuing his argument calmly.*] According to my opinion, Goethe with his senile regulations for actors denied, in the pettiest way, himself and his whole original nature. What is one to say of his ruling that every actor, irrespective of the quality of the character represented by him, must—these are his very words—show an ogre-like expression of countenance in order that the spectator be at once reminded of the nature of lofty tragedy. Actually, these are his very words!

[*KÄFERSTEIN and KEGEL make an effort to assume ogre-like expressions.*]

Hassenreuter. Get out your note-book, most excellent Spitta, and record your opinion, please, that Manager Hassenreuter is an ass, that Schiller is an ass, Goethe an ass, Aristotle, too, of course—[*he begins suddenly to laugh like mad*!—and ha, ha, ha! a certain Spitta a—night watchman!

Spitta. I'm glad to see, sir, that, at least, you've recovered your good humour.

Hassenreuter. The devil! I haven't recovered it at all! You're a symptom. So you needn't think yourself very important.—You are a rat, so to speak. One of those rats who are beginning, in the field of politics, to undermine our glorious and recently united German Empire! They are trying to cheat us of the reward of our

labours! And in the garden of German art these rats are gnawing at the roots of the tree of idealism. They are determined to drag its crown into the mire!—Down, down, down into the dust with you!

[*KÄFERSTEIN and KEGEL try to preserve their gravity but soon break out into loud laughter, which HASSENREUTER is impelled to join. WALBURGA looks on in wide-eyed astonishment. SPITTA remains serious. MRS. JOHN is now seen descending the stairs of the loft. After a little while QUARQUARO follows her.*]

Hassenreuter. [*Perceives MRS. JOHN and points her out to SPITTA with violent gesticulations as if he had just made an important discovery.*] There comes your tragic Muse!

Mrs. John. [*Approaches, abashed by the laughter of HASSENREUTER, KEGEL and KÄFERSTEIN.*] Why, what d'you see about me?

Hassenreuter. Nothing but what is good and beautiful, Mrs. John! You may thank God that your quiet, withdrawn and peaceful life unfits you for the part of a tragic heroine.—But tell me, have you, by any chance, had an interview with ghosts?

Mrs. John. [*Unnaturally pale.*] Why do you ask that?

Hassenreuter. Perhaps you even saw the famous soldier Sorgenfrei who closed his career above as a deserter into a better world?

Mrs. John. If it was a livin' soul, maybe you might be right. But I ain't scared o' no dead ghosts.

Hassenreuter. Well, Mr. Quarquaro, how did it look under the roof there?

Quarquaro. [*Who has brought down with him a Swedish riding-boot.*] Well, I took a pretty good look aroun' an' I came to the conclusion that, at least, some shelterless ragamuffins has passed the night there; though how they got in I ain't sayin'. An' then I found this here boot.—[*Out of the boot he draws an infant's bottle, topped by a rubber nipple and half filled with milk.*]

Mrs. John. That's easily explained. I was up there settin' things to rights an' I had little Adelbert along with me. But I don't know nothin' about the rest.

Hassenreuter. Nobody has undertaken to assert that you do, Mrs. John.

Mrs. John. When you considers how my little Adelbert came into the world . . . an' when you considers how he died . . . nobody c'n come an' tell me nothin' about bein' a reel mother . . . But I gotta leave now, sir . . . I can't be comin' up here for two three days. Good-bye! I has to go to my sister-in-law an' let Adelbert enjoy the country air a little. [*She trots off through the door to the outer hall.*]

Hassenreuter. Can you make anything of her wild talk?

Quaquaro. There's been a screw loose there ever since her first baby came an' all the more after it took an' died. Now since she's got the second one, there's two screws what's wobbly. Howsoever, she c'n count—that's a fac'. She's got a good bit o' money loaned out at interest on pawned goods.

Hassenreuter. Well, but what is the injured party—namely, myself—to do?

Quaquaro. That depends on where the suspicion falls.

Hassenreuter. In this house?—You'll admit yourself, Mr. Quaquaro . . .

Quaquaro. That's true all right. But it won't be long before we'll have a little cleanin' up aroun' here! The widow Knobbe with all her crowd is goin' to be put out! An' then there's a gang in wing B., where there's some tough customers by what Policeman Schierke tells me. Well, they're goin' to come from headquarters pretty soon and blow up that crowd.

Hassenreuter. There must be a glee club somewhere in the house. At least I hear excellent male voices singing from time to time things like "Germany, our highest glory," and "Who has built thee, noble wood," and "In a cool valley turneth."

Quaquaro. Them's the very fellers! That's right! An' they do sing fine! The sayin' is that bad men has no songs, but I wouldn't advise no one to fool with them! I wouldn't go into that company my own self without Prince. That's my bull dog. You just go an' lay information against 'em an' you won't be doin' no harm, sir. [*Exit.*]

Hassenreuter. [*Referring to QUAKARO.*] The gleam in his eye demands security. His lips demand cash. His fist portends immediate warning. He's a lucky creature who doesn't dream of him at the end of the month. And whoever dreams of him roars for help. A horrible, greasy fellow.

But without him the people who rent this old shell would get no money and the army-treasurer could strike the income of these rentals from his books.—[*The door bell rings.*—That is Miss Alice Rütterbusch, the young soubrette with whom, unfortunately, I haven't been able to make a hard and fast contract yet on account of the way the aldermen of Strassburg shilly shally about their final decision. After my appointment, which I will secure by God's help, her engagement will be my first managerial act.—Walburga and Spitta, march up into the loft! Count the contents of the six boxes marked "Journalists" in order that we may complete our inventory at the proper time.—[*To KÄFERSTEIN and Dr. KEGEL.*] You may withdraw into the library in the meantime . . . [*He steps forward in order to open the door.*]

[*WALBURGA and SPITTA disappear swiftly and very willingly into the loft; KÄFERSTEIN and KEGEL retire into the library.*]

Hassenreuter. [*In the background.*] If you please, step right in, my dear lady! I beg your pardon, sir! I was expecting a lady . . . I was expecting a young lady . . . But, please, come in.

[*HASSENREUTER comes forward accompanied by PASTOR SPITTA. The latter is sixty years old. A village parson, somewhat countrified. One might equally well take him to be a surveyor or a landowner in a small way. He is of vigorous appearance—short-necked, well-nourished, with a squat, broad face like Luther's. He wears a slouch-hat, spectacles and carries a cane and a coat of waterproof cloth over his arm. His clumsy boots and the state of his other garments show that they have long been accustomed to wind and weather.*]

Pastor Spitta. Do you know who I am, Mr. Hassenreuter?

Hassenreuter. Not quite exactly, but I would hazard . . .

Pastor Spitta. You may, you may! You needn't hesitate to call me Pastor Spitta from Schwoiz in Uckermark, whose son Erich—yes, that's it—has been employed in your family as private tutor or some-

thing like that. Erich Spitta: that's my son. And I'm obliged to say that with deep sorrow.

Hassenreuter. First of all, I'm very glad to have the privilege of your acquaintance. I hasten at once to beg you, however, dear Pastor, not to be too much worried, not to be too sorrowful concerning the little escapade in which your son is indulging.

Pastor Spitta. Oh, but I am greatly troubled, I am deeply grieved. [*Sitting down on a chair he surveys the strange place in which he finds himself with considerable interest.*] It is hard to say; it is extremely difficult to communicate to any one the real depth of anxiety. But forgive me a question, sir: I was in the trophy-chamber.—[*He touches one of the armored dummies with his cane.*] What kind of armor is this?

Hassenreuter. These figures are to represent the cuirassiers in Schiller's "Wallenstein."

Pastor Spitta. Ah, ah, my idea of Schiller was so very different! [*Collecting himself.*] Oh, this city of Berlin! It confuses me utterly. You see a man before you, sir, who is not only grieved, whom this Sodom of a city has not only stirred to his very depths, but who is actually broken-hearted by the deed of his son.

Hassenreuter. A deed? What deed?

Pastor Spitta. Is there any need to ask? The son of an honest man desiring to become an . . . an . . . an actor!

Hassenreuter. [*Drawing himself up. With the utmost dignity.*] My dear sir, I do not approve of your son's determination. But I am myself—*honi soit qui mal y pense*—the son of an honest man and myself, I trust, a man of honour. And I, whom you see before you, have been an actor, too. No longer than six weeks ago I took part in the Luther celebration—for I am no less an apostle of culture in the broadest sense—not only as manager but by ascending the boards on which the world is shadowed forth as an actor! From my point of view, therefore, your son's determination is scarcely open to objection on the score of his social standing or his honourable character. But it is a difficult calling and demands, above all, a high degree of talent. I am also willing to admit that it is a calling not without peculiar

dangers to weak characters. And finally I have myself proved the unspeakable hardships of my profession so thoroughly that I would like to guard anyone else from entering it. That is the reason why I box my daughters' ears if the slightest notion of going on the stage seizes them, and why I would rather tie stones about their necks and drown them where the sea is deepest than see them marry actors.

Pastor Spitta. I didn't mean to wound any one's feelings. I admit, too, that a simple country parson like myself can't very well have much of a conception of such things. But consider a father now—just such a poor country parson—who has saved and hoarded his pennies in order that his son might have a career at the university. Now consider, further, that this son is just about to take his final examinations and that his father and his mother—I have a sick wife at home—are looking forward with anxiety and with longing, whichever you call it, toward the moment in which their son will mount the pulpit and deliver the trial sermon before the congregation of his choice. And then comes this letter. Why, the boy is mad!

[*The emotion of the Pastor is not exactly consciously directed; it is controlled. The trembling of the hand with which he searches for the letter in his inner pocket and hands it to the manager is not quite convincing.*]

Hassenreuter. Young men search after various aims. We musn't be too much taken by surprise if, once in a while, a crisis of this kind is not to be avoided in a young man's life.

Pastor Spitta. Well, this crisis was avoidable. It will not be difficult for you to see from this letter who is responsible for this destructive change in the soul of a young, an excellent, and hitherto thoroughly obedient youth. I should never have sent him to Berlin. Yes, it is this so-called scientific theology, this theology that flirts with all the pagan philosophers, that would change the Lord our God into empty smoke and sublimate our blessed Saviour into thin air—it is this that I hold responsible for the grievous mistake of my child. And to this may be added other temptations. I tell you, sir, I have seen things which it is im-

possible for me to speak of! I have circulars in every pocket—"Ball of the Elite! Smart waitresses!" and so on! I was quietly walking, at half past twelve one night, through the arcade that connects Friedrich street with the Linden, and a disgusting fellow sidles up to me, wretched, undergrown, and asks me with a kind of greasy, shifty impudence: Doesn't the gentleman want something real fetching? And these show windows in which, right by the pictures of noble and exalted personages, naked actresses, dancers, in short the most shocking nudities are displayed! And finally this Corso—oh, this Corso! Where painted and bedizened vice jostles respectable women from the sidewalk! It's simply the end of the world!

Hassenreuter. Ah, my dear Pastor, the world doesn't so easily come to an end—nor, surely, will it do so on account of the nudities that offend or of the vice which slinks through the streets at night. The world will probably outlive me and the whole scurrilous interlude of humanity.

Pastor Spitta. What turns these young people aside from the right path is evil example and easy opportunity.

Hassenreuter. I beg your pardon, Pastor, but I have not observed in your son the slightest inclination toward leading a frivolous life. He is simply attracted to literature, and he isn't the first clergyman's son—remember merely Lessing and Herder—who has taken the road of literary study and creative art. Very likely he has manuscript plays in his desk even now. To be sure, I am bound to admit that the opinions which your son defends in the field of literature frighten even me at times!

Pastor Spitta. But that's horrible! That's frightful! That far exceeds my worst fears! And so my eyes have been opened.—My dear sir, I have had eight children, of whom Erich seemed our fairest hope and his next-oldest sister our heaviest trial. And now, it seems, the same accursed city has demanded them both as its victims. The girl developed prematurely, she was beautiful . . . and . . . But I must mention another circumstance now. I have been in Berlin for three days and I haven't seen Erich yet. When I tried to see him to-day, he was not at home in his rooms. I waited for a while and naturally looked about me

in my son's dwelling. And now: look at this picture, sir! [*Replacing ERICH's letter in his pocket he extracts therefrom a small photograph and holds it immediately under HASSENREUTER's eyes.*]

Hassenreuter. [*Takes the picture and holds it at varying distances from him. He is disconcerted.*] Why should I look at this?

Pastor Spitta. The silly little face is of no importance. But pray look at the inscription.

Hassenreuter. Where?

Pastor Spitta. [*Reads.*] "From Walburga to her only sweetheart."

Hassenreuter. Permit me!—What's the meaning of this?

Pastor Spitta. It simply means some seamstress if not, what is worse, some shady waitress!

Hassenreuter. H-m. [*He slips the picture into his pocket.*] I shall keep this photograph.

Pastor Spitta. It is in such filth that my son wallows. And consider the situation in which it puts me: with what feelings, with what front shall I henceforward face my congregation from the pulpit . . . ?

Hassenreuter. Confound it, what business is that of mine? What have I to do with your offspring, with your lost sons and daughters? [*He pulls out the photograph again.*] And furthermore, as far as this excellent and sound-hearted young lady is concerned, you're quite mistaken in your ideas about waitresses and such like. I'll say nothing more. All other matters will adjust themselves. Good-bye.

Pastor Spitta. I confess frankly, I don't understand you. Probably this tone is the usual one in your circles. I will go and not annoy you any longer. But as a father I have the right, before God, to demand of you that henceforth you refuse to my deluded son this so-called dramatic instruction. I hope I shall not have to look for further ways and means of enforcing this demand.

Hassenreuter. I won't only do that, but I'll actually put him out of doors. [*He accompanies the PASTOR to the door, slams it behind him and returns alone.*]

Hassenreuter. [*Waving his arms through the air.*] All that one can say here is: Plain parson! [*He rushes halfway up the*

stairs to the loft.] Spitta! Walburga! Come down here, will you?

[WALBURGA and SPITTA come down.]

Hassenreuter. [To WALBURGA, who looks at him questioningly.] Go to your high stool over there and sit down on the humorous part of your anatomy! Well, and you, my dear Spitta, what do you want?

Spitta. You called us both, sir.

Hassenreuter. Exactly. Now look me in the eye!

Spitta. Certainly.

[He looks straight at HASENREUTER.]

Hassenreuter. You two want to make an ass of me. But you won't succeed! Silence! Not a word! I would have expected something very different from you! This is a striking proof of ingratitude. Keep still! Furthermore, a gentleman was here just now! That gentleman is afraid in Berlin! March! Follow him! Take him down into the street and try to make it clear to him that I'm neither your boot-black nor his.

[SPITTA shrugs his shoulders, takes his hat and goes.]

Hassenreuter. [Strides up to WALBURGA energetically and tweaks her ear.] And as for you, my dear, you'll have your ears soundly boxed if ever again without my permission you exchange two words with this rascal of a theologian gone to smash!

Walburga. Ouch, papa, ouch!

Hassenreuter. This fellow who is fond of making such an innocent face as if he couldn't harm a fly and whom I was careless enough to admit to my house is, unfortunately, a man behind whose mask the most shameless impudence lies in wait. I and my house are in the service of true propriety. Do you want to besmirch the escutcheon of our honour as the sister of this fellow seems to have done—a girl who disgraced her parents by coming to an end in the street and the gutter?

Walburga. I don't share your opinion about Erich, papa.

Hassenreuter. What's that? Well, at least you know my opinion. Either you give him his walking papers or else you can look out for yourself and find out what it is to get along, away from your parental roof, in a way of life regardless of honour, duty and decency! In that case you can

go! I have no use for daughters of that kind!

Walburga. [Pale and sombre.] You are always saying, papa, that you too had to make your way independently and without your parents.

Hassenreuter. You're not a man.

Walburga. Certainly not. But think, for instance, of Alice Rütterbusch.

[Father and daughter look firmly into each other's eyes.]

Hassenreuter. Why should I? Have you a fever, eh? Or have you gone mad? [He drops the whole discussion, noticeably put out of countenance, and taps at the library door.] Where did we leave off? Begin at the proper place.

[KEGEL and KÄFERSTEIN appear.]

Kegel and Käferstein. [Declaim.]

"A wiser temper

Beseemeth age.

I, being reasonable,

Salute him first."

[Led and directed by SPITTA appear PAULINE PIPERCARCKA in street dress and MRS. KIELBACKE, who carries an infant on a pillow.]

Hassenreuter. What do you want here? What kind of women are you bringing here to annoy me?

Spitta. It isn't my fault, sir. The women insisted on coming to you.

Mrs. Kielbacke. No; all we wants is to see Mrs. John.

Pauline. An' Mrs. John she's always up here with you!

Hassenreuter. True. But I'm beginning to regret the fact, and I must insist, at all events, that she hold her private receptions in her own rooms and not here. Otherwise I'll soon equip the door here with patent locks and mantraps.—What's the matter with you, my good Spitta? I suppose you'll have to have the goodness to show these ladies the place they really want to go to.

Pauline. But Mrs. John ain't to be found in her rooms downstairs.

Hassenreuter. Well, she's not to be found up here either.

Mrs. Kielbacke. The reason is because this here young lady has her little son boardin' with Mrs. John.

Hassenreuter. Glad to hear it! Please

march now without further delay! Save me, Käferstein!

Mrs. Kielbacke. An' now a gentleman's come from the city, from the office of the government guardian office to see how the child is an' if it's well taken care of an' in good condition. An' then he went into Mrs. John's room an' we went with him. An' there was the child an' a note pinned to it what said that Mrs. John was workin' for you up here.

Hassenreuter. Where was the child boardin'?

Mrs. Kielbacke. With Mrs. John.

Hassenreuter. [*Impatiently.*] That's simply a piece of imbecility. You are quite wrong.—Spitta, you would have been much better employed accompanying the old gentleman after whom I sent you than aiding these ladies to come here.

Spitta. I looked for the gentleman you speak of but he was already gone.

Hassenreuter. These ladies don't seem to believe me. Will you kindly inform them, gentlemen, that Mrs. John has no child in board, and that they are quite obviously mistaken in the name.

Käferstein. I am asked to tell you that you are probably mistaken in the name.

Pauline. [*Vehemently and tearfully.*] She has got my baby! She had my baby boardin' with her. An' the gentleman came from the city an' he said that the child wasn't in no good hands an' that it was neglected. She went an' ruined my baby's health.

Hassenreuter. There is no doubt but what you have mistaken the name of the woman of whom you speak. Mrs. John has no child in board.

Pauline. She had my baby in her claws, that's what! An' she let it starve an' get sick! I gotta see her! I gotta tell her right out! She's gotta make my little baby well again! I gotta go to court. The gentleman says as how I gotta go to court an' give notice.

Hassenreuter. I beg of you not to get excited. The fact is that you are mistaken! How did you ever hit on the idea that Mrs. John has a child in board?

Pauline. Because I gave it to her myself.

Hassenreuter. But Mrs. John has her own child and it just occurs to me that she has

taken it along with her on a visit to her sister-in-law.

Pauline. She ain't got no child. No, Mrs. John ain't got none! She cheats an' she lies. She ain't got none. She took my little Alois an' she ruined him.

Hassenreuter. By heaven, ladies, you are mistaken!

Pauline. Nobody won't believe me that I had a baby. My intended he wrote me a letter an' he says it ain't true an' that I'm a liar an' a low creature. [*She touches the pillow on which the infant is resting.*] It's mine an' I'll prove it in court! I c'n swear it by the holy Mother o' God.

Hassenreuter. Do uncover the child. [*It is done and Hassenreuter observes the infant attentively.*]—H'm, the matter will not remain long in obscurity. In the first place . . . I know Mrs. John. If she had had this child in board it could never look as it does. And that is true quite simply because, where it is a question of children, Mrs. John has her heart in the right place.

Pauline. I want to see Mrs. John. That's all I says. I don't has to tell my business to everybody in the world. I c'n tell everythin' in court, down to the least thing—the day an' the hour an' jus' exactly the place where it was born! People is goin' to open their eyes; you c'n believe me.

Hassenreuter. What you assert, then, if I understand you rightly, is that Mrs. John has no baby of her own at all, and that the one which passes as such is in reality yours.

Pauline. God strike me dead if that ain't the truth!

Hassenreuter. And this is the child in question? I trust that God won't take you at your word this time.—You must know that I, who stand before you, am manager Hassenreuter and I have personally had in my own hands the child of Mrs. John, my charwoman, on three or four occasions. I even weighed it on the scales and found it to weigh over eight pounds. This poor little creature doesn't weigh over four pounds. And on the basis of this fact I can assure you that this child is not, at least, the child of Mrs. John. You may be right in asserting that it is yours. I am in no position to throw doubt on that. But I know Mrs. John's child and I am quite sure that it is, in no wise, identical with this.

Mrs. Kielbacke. [*Respectfully.*] No, no, that's right enough. It ain't identical.

Pauline. This baby here is identical enough all right, even if it's a bit underfed an' weakly. This business with the child is all straight enough! I'll take an oath that it's identical all right.

Hassenreuter. I am simply speechless. [*To his pupils.*] Our lesson is ruled by an evil star to-day, my dear boys. I don't know why, but the error which these ladies are making engrosses me. [*To the women.*] You may have entered the wrong door.

Mrs. Kielbacke. No, me an' the gentleman from the guardian's office an' the young lady went an' fetched this here child outa the room what has the name plate o' Mrs. John on it, an' took it out into the hall. Mrs. John wasn't there an' her husband the mason is absent in Hamburg.

[*POLICEMAN SCHIERKE comes in, fat and good-natured.*]

Hassenreuter. Ah, there's Mr. Schierke! What do you want here?

Schierke. I understand, sir, that two women fled up here to you.

Mrs. Kielbacke. We ain't fled at all.

Hassenreuter. They were inquiring for Mrs. John.

Schierke. May I be permitted to ax somethin' too?

Hassenreuter. If you please.

Pauline. Jus' let him ax. We don't has to worry.

Schierke. [*To MRS. KIELBACKE.*] What's your name?

Mrs. Kielbacke. I'm Mrs. Kielbacke.

Schierke. You're connected with the society for raisin' children, eh? Where do you live?

Mrs. Kielbacke. Linien street number nine.

Schierke. Is that your child that you have there?

Mrs. Kielbacke. That's Miss Pipercarca her child.

Schierke. [*To PAULINE.*] An' your name?

Pauline. Paula Pipercarca from Skorzenin.

Schierke. This woman asserts that the child is yours. Do you assert that too?

Pauline. Sergeant, I has to ax for your protection because suspicions is cast on me an' I'm innercent. The gentleman from the

city did come to me. An' I did get my child outa the room o' Mrs. John what I had it in board with . . .

Schierke. [*With a searching look.*] Yes? Maybe it was the door across the way where the restaurant keeper's widow Knobbe lives. Nobody knows what you're up to with that child nor who sent you an' bribed you. You ain't got a good conscience! You took the child an' slipped up here with it while its rightful mother, the widow Knobbe, what it's been stolen from, is huntin' all over the stairs an' halls for it an' while a detective is standin' acrost the way.

Pauline. I don't care about no detective. I'm . . .

Hassenreuter. You are refuted, my good girl. Can't you comprehend that? First you say that Mrs. John has no child. Next you say—kindly attend to me—that you had taken your child, which has been passing for Mrs. John's, out of the latter's room. However: all of us here happen to know Mrs. John's child and the one you have here is another. Is that clear to you? Hence your assertion cannot, in any circumstances, be a correct one!—And now, Schierke, you would do me a favor if you would conduct these ladies out so that I can continue giving my lesson.

Schierke. All right, but if I does that we'll get into that Knobbe crowd. Because her child has been stolen.

Pauline. It ain't me that done it; it's Mrs. John.

Schierke. That's all right. [*Continuing his account to HASENREUTER.*] And they says that the child has blue blood in it on its father's side. So Mrs. Knobbe thinks as how it's a plot of enemies 'cause they grudges her the alimony in some quarters an' a gentleman's eddication for the kid. [*Someone is beating at the door with fists.*] That's the Knobbe woman. There she comes now!

Hassenreuter. Mr. Schierke, you are responsible to me. If these people trespass on my premises and I suffer any damages thereby, I'll complain to the chief of police. I know Mr. Maddei very well. Don't be afraid, my dear boys. You are my witnesses.

Schierke. [*At the door.*] You stay out there! You don't get in here!

[A small mob howls outside of the door.]

Pauline. They c'n holler all they wants to but they can't get my child.

Hassenreuter. Perhaps this is the better way. You go into the library for the present. [He escorts PAULINE, MRS. KIELBACKE and the child into the library.] And now, Mr. Schierke, we might risk letting that fury enter in here.

Schierke. [Opening the door slightly.] All right. But only Mrs. Knobbe! Come in here a minute.

[MRS. SIDONIE KNOBBE appears. She is tall and emaciated and dressed in a badly worn but fashionable summer gown. Her face bears the stigma of a dissolute life but gives evidence of a not ungentle origin. Her air is curiously like that of a gentlewoman. She talks affectedly and her eyes show addiction to alcohol and morphine.]

Mrs. Knobbe. [Sailing in.] There is no cause for any anxiety, Mr. Hassenreuter. Those without are principally little boys and girls who have come with me because I am fond of children. Pray pardon me if I intrude. One of the children told me that two women had sneaked up here with my little boy. I am looking for my little son, named Helfgott Gundofried, who has actually disappeared from my dwelling. At the same time I do not wish to incommode you.

Schierke. An' you better not do that if I has any say about it.

Mrs. Knobbe. [Disregarding these words except by a proud toss of the head.] To my great regret I caused a certain amount of disturbance in the yard. From the yard as a place of vantage it is possible to command every window and I made inquires of the poor cigar maker in the second story and of the consumptive little seamstress in the third as to whether my Selma and my little son were with either of them. But nothing is farther from my intention than to create a scandal. I want you to know—for I am quite conscious of being in the presence of a distinguished, indeed, of a famous man—you are to know that where Helfgott Gundofried is concerned I am obliged to be strictly on my guard! [With quivering voice and an occasional applica-

tion of her handkerchief to her eyes.] I am an unfortunate woman who is pursued by fate, who has sunk low but who has seen better days. I do not care to bore you with my troubles. But I am being pursued and there are those who would rob me of my last hope.

Schierke. Aw, hurry up an' say what you has to!

Mrs. Knobbe. [As before.] It is not enough that I was forced to lay aside my honest name. Later I lived in Paris and then married a brutal person, a south German inn-keeper, because I had the foolish thought that my affairs might be bettered thereby. O these scoundrels of men!

Schierke. This don't lead to nothin'! You cut it short, I tell you.

Mrs. Knobbe. But I am glad of the opportunity of standing, once more, face to face with a man of culture and intellect. I could a tale unfold . . . Popularly I am known here as "the countess" and God is my witness that in my earlier youth I was not far removed from that estate! For a time I was an actress, too. What did I say! I could unfold a tale from my life, from my past, which would have the advantage of not being invented!

Schierke. Maybe not. Nobody c'n tell.

Mrs. Knobbe. [With renewed emphasis.] My wretchedness is not invented, although it may seem so when I relate how, one night, sunk in the deepest abysses of my shame, I met on the street a cousin—the playmate of my youth—who is now captain in the horse-guards. He lives in the world: I live in the underworld ever since my father from pride of rank and race disowned me because in my earliest youth I had made a mistake. Oh, you have no conception of the dullness, the coarseness, the essential vulgarity that obtains in those circles. I am a trodden worm, sir, and yet not for a moment do I yearn to be there, in that glittering wretchedness . . .

Schierke. Maybe you don't mind comin' to the point now!

Hassenreuter. If you please, Mr. Schierke, all that interests me. So suppose you don't interrupt the lady for a while. [To Mrs. KNOBBE.] You were speaking of your cousin. Didn't you say that he is a captain in the horse-guards?

Mrs. Knobbe. He was in plain clothes.

He is, however, a captain in the horse-guards. He recognized me at once and we dedicated some blessed though painful hours to memories. Accompanying him there was—I will not call his name—a very young lieutenant, a fair, sweet boy, delicate and brooding. Mr. Hassenreuter, I have forgotten what shame is! Was I not even, the other day, turned out of church? Why should a down-trodden, dishonoured, deserted creature, more than once punished by the laws—why should such an one hesitate to confess that he became the father of Helfgott Gundofried?

Hassenreuter. Of this baby that's been stolen from you?

Mrs. Knobbe. Yes, stolen! At least it is so asserted! It may be! But though my enemies are mighty and have every means at their command, I am not yet wholly convinced of it. And yet it may be a plot concocted by the parents of the child's father whose name you would be astonished to hear, for they represent one of the oldest and most illustrious families. Farewell! Whatever you may hear of me, sir, do not think that my better feelings have been wholly extinguished in the mire into which I am forced to cast myself. I need this mire in which I am on terms of equality with the dregs of mankind. Here, look! [*She thrusts forward her naked arm.*] Forgetfulness! Insensibility! I achieve it by means of chloral, of opium. Or I find it in the abysses of human life. And why not? To whom am I responsible?—There was a time when my dear mama was scolded by my father on my account! The maid had convulsions because of me! Mademoiselle and an English governess tore each other's *chignons* from their heads because each asserted that I loved her best—! Now . . .

Schierke. Aw, I tell you to shut it now! We can't take up people's time an' lock 'em up. [*He opens the library door.*] Now tell us if this here is your kid?

[*PAULINE, staring at MRS. KNOBBE with eyes full of hatred, comes out first. MRS. KIELBACKE, carrying the child, comes next. SCHIERKE removes the shawl that has been thrown over the child.*]

Pauline. What d'you want o' me? Why d'you come chasin' me? I ain' no gypsy!

I don't go in people's houses stealin' their children! Eh? You're crazy. I wouldn't do no such thing. I ain't hardly got enough to eat for myself an' my own child. D'you s'pose I'm goin' to steal strange children an' feed 'em till they're grown when the one I got is trouble an' worry enough!

[*MRS. KNOBBE stares about her inquiringly and as if seeking help. Rapidly she draws a little flask from her pocket and pours its contents upon a handkerchief. The latter she carries swiftly to her mouth and nose, inhaling the fragrance of the perfume to keep her from fainting.*]

Hassenreuter. Well, why don't you speak, Mrs. Knobbe? This girl asserts that she is the mother of the child—not you.

[*MRS. KNOBBE lifts her umbrella in order to strike out with it. She is restrained by those present.*]

Schierke. That won't do! You can't practice no discipline like that here! You c'n do that when you're alone in your nursery downstairs.—The main thing is: who does this here kid belong to? An' so—now—Mrs. Knobbe, you just take care an' think so's to tell nothin' but the truth here! Well! Is it yours or is it her'n?

Mrs. Knobbe. [*Bursts out.*] I swear by the holy Mother of God, by Jesus Christ, Father, Son and Holy Ghost that I am the mother of this child.

Pauline. An' I swears by the Holy Mother o' God . . .

Hassenreuter. You'd better not if you want to save your soul! We may have a case here in which the circumstances are complicated in the extreme! It is possible, therefore, that you were about to swear in perfectly good faith. But you will have to admit that, though each of you may well be the mother of twins—two mothers for one child is unthinkable!

Walburga. [*Who, like MRS. KNOBBE, has been staring steadily at the child.*] Papa, papa, do look at the child a moment first!

Mrs. Kielbacke. [*Tearfully and horrified.*] Yes, the poor little crittur's been a'dyin'. I believe, ever since I was in the other room there!

Schierke. What?

Hassenreuter. How? [*Energetically he strides forward and now regards the child*]

carefully too.] The child is dead. There's no question about that! It seems that, invisible to us, one has been in our midst who has delivered judgment, truly according to the manner of Solomon, concerning the poor little passive object of all this strife.

Pauline. [Who has not understood.] What's the matter?

Schierke. Keep still!—You come along with me.

[Mrs. KNOBBE seems to have lost the power of speech. She puts her handkerchief into her mouth. A moaning sob is heard deep in her chest. SCHIERKE, Mrs. KIEL-BACKE with the dead child, followed by Mrs. KNOBBE and PAULINE PIPERCARCKA, leave the room. A dull murmur is heard from the outer hall. HASSENREUTER returns to the foreground after he has locked the door behind those who have left.]

Hassenreuter. Sic eunt fata hominum. Invent something like that, if you can, my good Spitta.

ACT FOUR

The dwelling of the foreman-mason JOHN as in the second act. It is eight o'clock on a Sunday morning.

JOHN is invisible behind the partition. From his splashing and snorting it is clear that he is performing his morning ablutions.

QUAQUARO has just entered. His hand is still on the knob of the outer door.

Quaquaro. Tell me, Paul, is your wife at home?

John. [From behind the partition.] Not yet, Emil. My wife went with the boy out to my married sister's in Hangelsberg. But she's goin' to come back this mornin'. *[Drying his hands and face, JOHN appears in the door of the partition wall.]* Good mornin' to you, Emil.

Quaquaro. Mornin', Paul.

John. Well, what's the news? I didn't come from the train till about half an hour ago.

Quaquaro. Yes, I saw you goin' into the house an' mountin' the stairs.

John. [In a jolly frame of mind.] That's

right, Emil! You're a regular old watchdog, eh?

Quaquaro. Tell, me, Paul: How long has your wife'n the kid been out in Hangelsberg?

John. Oh, that must be somethin' like a week now, Emil. D'you want anythin' of her? I guess she paid her rent an' on time all right. By the way, I might as well give you notice right now. We got it all fixed. We're goin' to move on the first of October. I got mother to the point at last that we c'n move outa this here shaky old barracks an' into a better neighbourhood.

Quaquaro. So you ain't goin' back to Hamburg no more?

John. Naw. It's a good sayin': Stay at home an' make an honest livin'! I'm not goin' outa town no more. Not a bit of it! First of all, it's no sort o' life, goin' from one lodgin' to another. An' then—a man don't get no younger neither! The girls, they ain't so hot after you no more . . . No, it's a good thing that all this wanderin' about is goin' to end.

Quaquaro. Your wife—she's a fine schemer.

John. [Merrily.] Well, this is a brand new household what's jus' had a child born into it. I said to the boss: I'm a newly married man! Then he axed me if my first wife was dead. On the contrary an' not a bit of it, I says. She's alive an' kickin', so that she's jus' given birth to a kickin' young citizen o' Berlin, that's what! When I was travelin' along from Hamburg this mornin' by all the old stations—Hamburg, Stendal, Ultzen—an' got outa the fourth-class coach at the Lehrter station with all my duds, the devil take me if I didn't thank God with a sigh. I guess he didn't hear on account o' the noise o' the trains.

Quaquaro. Did you hear, Paul, that Mrs. Knobbe's youngest over the way has been taken off again?

John. No. What chance did I have to hear that? But if it's dead, it's a good thing, Emil. When I saw the poor crittur a week ago when it had convulsions an' Selma brought it in an' me an' mother gave it a spoonful o' sugar an' water—well, it was pretty near ready for heaven then.

Quaquaro. An' you mean to tell me that you didn't hear nothin' o' the circum-

stances, about the how an' the why o' that child's death?

John. Naw! [*He fetches a long tobacco pipe from behind the sofa.*] Wait a minute! I'll light a pipe first! I didn't have no chanct to hear nothin'.

Quaquaro. Well, I'm surprised that your wife didn't write you nothin' at all.

John. Aw, since we has a child o' our own, mother's taken no interest in them Knobbe brats no more.

Quaquaro. [*Observing JOHN with lurking curiosity.*] Your wife was reel crazy to have a son, wasn't she?

John. Well, that's natural. D'you think I wasn't? What's a man to work for? What do I slave away for? It's different thing savin' a good lump o' money for your own son from doin' it for your sister's children.

Quaquaro. So you don't know that a strange girl came here an' swore that the Knobbe woman's child wasn't hers but belonged to the girl?

John. Is that so? Well, Mrs. Knobbe an' child stealin'—them two things don't go together. Now if it'd been mother, that would ha' been more likely. But not that Knobbe woman! But tell me, Emil, what's all this here business about?

Quaquaro. Well, one person says one thing an' another says another. The Knobbe woman says that certain people has started a plot with detectives an' such like to get hold o' the brat. An' there ain't no doubt o' this. It's proved that the child was hers. C'n you maybe give me a tip as to where your brother-in-law's been keepin' hisself the past few days?

John. You mean the butcher in Hangelsberg?

Quaquaro. Naw, I don't mean the husband o' your sister, but the feller what's brother o' your wife.

John. It's Bruno you mean?

Quaquaro. Sure, that's the feller.

John. How do I know? I'd sooner be watchin' if the dogs still plays on the curb. I don't want to have no dealin's with Bruno.

Quaquaro. Listen to me, Paul. But don't get mad. They knows at the police station that Bruno was seen in company o' the Polish girl what wanted to claim this here child, first right outside o' the door here an' then at a certain place on Shore street

where the tanners sometimes looses their soakin' hides. An' now the girl's jus' disappeared. I don't know nothin' o' the particulars, excep' that the police is huntin' for the girl.

John. [*Resolutely putting aside the long pipe which he had lit.*] I don't know, but I can't take no enjoyment in it this mornin'. I don't know what's gotten into me. I was as jolly as can be. An' now all of a sudden I feel so dam' mean I'd like to go straight back to Hamburg an' hear an' see nothin' more!—Why d'you come aroun' with stories like that?

Quaquaro. I jus' thought I'd tell you what happened while you an' your wife was away right here in your own house?

John. In my own house?

Quaquaro. That's it! Yessir! They says that Selma pushed the perambulator with her little brother in here where the strange girl an' her friend came an' took him an' carried him off. But upstairs, in the actor's place, they caught her.

John. What's that?

Quaquaro. So up there the strange girl an' the Knobbe woman pretty near tore each other's hair out over the child's body.

John. What I'd like to know is how all that concerns me? Ain't there trouble here over some girl most o' the time? Let 'em go on! I don't care! That is to say, Emil, if there ain't more to it than you're tellin' me.

Quaquaro. That's why I come to you! There is more. The girl said in front o' witnesses more'n oncet that that little crittur o' Knobbe's was her own an' that she had expressly given it in board to your wife.

John. [*First taken aback, then relieved. Laughing.*] She ain't quite right in her upper story. That's all.

[*ERICH SPITTA enters.*]

Spitta. Good morning, Mr. John.

John. Good mornin', Mr. Spitta. [*To QUAKUARO, who is still loitering in the door.*] It's all right, Emil. I'll take notice o' what you says an' act accordin'.

[*QUAKUARO exits.*]

John. Now jus' look at a feller like that, Mr. Spitta. He's more'n half a gaol bird an' yet he knows how to make hisself a favourite with the district commissioner at

headquarters! An' then he goes aroun' pokin' his nose into honest folks' affairs.

Spitta. Has Miss Walburga Hassenreuter been asking after me, Mr. John?

John. Not up to this time; not that I knows of! [*He opens the door to the hall.*] Selma! Excuse me a minute, will you? Selma! I gotta know what that there girl c'n tell me.

[*SELMA KNOBBE enters.*]

Selma. [*Still at the door.*] What d'you want?

John. You shut the door a minute an' come in! An' now tell me, girl, what's all this that happened in this room about your little dead brother and the strange girl?

Selma. [*Who has, obviously, a bad conscience, gradually comes forward watchfully. She now answers glibly and volubly.*] I pushed the perambulator over into the room here. Your wife wasn't in an' so I thinks that maybe here there'd be more quiet, 'cause my little brother, you know, he was sick anyhow an' cryin' all the time. An' then, all of a sudden, a gentleman an' a lady an' another woman all comes in here, an' they picked the little feller right outa the carriage an' put clean clothes on him an' carried him off.

John. An' then the lady said as how it was her child an' how she'd given it in board with mother, with my old woman?

Selma. [*Lies.*] Naw, not a bit. I'd know about that if it was so.

John. [*Bangs his fist on the table.*] Well, damn it all, it'd be a idjit's trick to have said that.

Spitta. Permit me, but she did say that. I take it you're talking of the incident with the two women that took place upstairs at manager Hassenreuter's?

John. Did you see that? Was you there when the Knobbe woman an' the other one was disputin' about the little crittur?

Spitta. Yes, certainly. I was present throughout.

Selma. I tell you all I knows. An' I couldn't say no more if officer Schierke or the tall police lieutenant hisself was to examine me for hours an' hours. I don't know nothin'. An' what I don't know I can't tell.

John. The lieutenant examined you?

Selma. They wanted to take mama to the lock-up because people went an' lied.

They said that our little baby was starved to death.

John. Aha! 's that so? Well, Selma, s'pose you go over there an' cook a little coffee.

[*SELMA goes over to the stove where she prepares coffee for JOHN. JOHN himself goes up to his working table, takes up the compass. Then he draws lines, using a piece of rail as a ruler.*]

Spitta. [*Conquering his diffidence and shame.*] I really hoped to meet your wife here, Mr. John. Someone told me that your wife has been in the habit of lending out small sums to students against security. And I am somewhat embarrassed.

John. Maybe that's so. But tha's mother's business, Mr. Spitta.

Spitta. To be quite frank with you, if I don't get hold of some money by to-night, the few books and other possessions I have will be attached for rent by my landlady and I'll be put into the street.

John. I thought your father was a preacher.

Spitta. So he is. But for that very reason and because I don't want to become a preacher, too, he and I had a terrible quarrel last night. I won't ever accept a farthing from him any more.

John. [*Busy over his drawing.*] Then it'll serve him right if you starve or break your neck.

Spitta. Men like myself don't starve, Mr. John. But if, by any chance, I were to go to the dogs—I shouldn't greatly care.

John. No one wouldn't believe how many half-starved nincompoops there is among you stoo-dents. But none o' you wants to put your hand to some reel work.—[*The distant sound of thunder is heard. JOHN looks out through the window.*—Sultry day. It's thunderin' now.

Spitta. You can't say that of me, Mr. John, that I haven't been willing to do real work. I've given lessons, I've addressed envelopes for business houses! I've been through everything and in all these attempts I've not only toiled away the days but also the nights. And at the same time I've ground away at my studies like anything!

John. Man alive, go to Hamburg an' let 'em give you a job as a bricklayer. When

I was your age I was makin' as much as twelve crowns a day in Hamburg.

Spitta. That may be. But I'm a brain worker.

John. I know that kind.

Spitta. Is that so? I don't think you do know that kind, Mr. John. I beg you not to forget that your Socialist leaders—your Bebels and your Liebknechts—are brain workers too.

John. All right. Come on, then! Let's have some breakfast. Things look mighty different after a man's had a good bite o' breakfast. I s'pose you ain't had any yet, Mr. Spitta?

Spitta. No, frankly, not to-day.

John. Well, then the first thing is to get somethin' warm down your throat.

Spitta. There's time enough for that.

John. I don't know. You're lookin' pretty well done up. An' I passed the night on the train too. [*To SELMA, who has brought in a little linen bag filled with rolls.*] Hurry an' bring another cup over here.

[*He has seated himself at his ease on the sofa, dips a roll into the coffee and begins to eat and drink.*]

Spitta. [*Who has not sat down yet.*] It's really pleasanter to pass a summer night in the open if one can't sleep anyhow. And I didn't sleep for one minute.

John. I'd like to see the feller what c'n sleep when he's outa cash. When a man's down in the world he has most company outa doors too. [*He suddenly stops chewing.*—Come here, Selma, an' tell me exactly just how it was with that there girl an' the child that she took outa our room here.

Selma. I don't know what to do. Every-body axes me that. Mama keeps axin' me about it all day long; if I seen Bruno Mechelke; if I know who it was that stole the costumes from the actor's loft up there! If it goes on that way . . .

John. [*Energetically.*] Girl, why didn't you cry out when the gentleman and the young lady took your little brother outa his carriage?

Selma. I didn't think nothin' 'd happen to him excep' that he'd get some clean clothes.

John. [*Grasps SELMA by the wrist.*] Well,

you come along with me now. We'll go over an' see your mother.

[*JOHN and SELMA leave the room. As soon as they are gone SPITTA begins to eat ravenously. Soon thereafter WALBURGA appears. She is in great haste and strongly excited.*]

Walburga. Are you alone?

Spitta. For the moment, yes. Good morning, Walburga.

Walburga. Am I too late? It was only by the greatest cunning, by the greatest determination, by the most ruthless disregard of everything that I succeeded in getting away from home. My younger sister tried to bar the door. Even the servant girl! But I told mama that if they wouldn't let me out through the door, they might just as well bar the window, else I'd reach the street through it, although it's three stories high. I flew. I'm more dead than alive. But I am prepared for anything. How was it with your father, Erich?

Spitta. We have parted. He thought that I was going out to eat husks with the swine as the Prodigal Son did, and told me not to take it into my mind ever again to cross the threshold of my father's house in my future capacity as acrobat or bareback rider, as he was pleased to express it. His door was not open to such scum! Well, I'll fight it down! Only I'm sorry for my poor, dear mother.—You can't imagine with what abysmal hatred a man of his kind considers the theatre and everything connected with it. The heaviest curse is not strong enough to express his feelings. An actor is, to his mind, *a priori*, the worst, most contemptible scamp imaginable.

Walburga. I've found out, too, how papa discovered our secret.

Spitta. My father gave him your picture.

Walburga. O Erich, if you knew with what awful, with what horrible names papa overwhelmed me in his rage. And I had to be silent through it all. I might have said something that would have silenced all his lofty moral discourses and made him quite helpless before me. I was almost on the point of saying it, too. But I felt so ashamed for him! My tongue refused to form the words! I couldn't say it, Erich! Finally mama had to intervene. He struck me! For eight or nine hours he

locked me in a dark alcove—to break my stubbornness, as he put it, Erich. Well, he won't succeed! He won't break it!

Spitta. [*Taking WALBURGA into his arms.*] You dear, brave girl! I am beginning to see now what I possess in having your love, what a treasure you are! [*Passionately.*] And how beautiful you look, Walburga!

Walburga. Don't! Don't—I trust you, Erich; that's all.

Spitta. And you shall not be disappointed, dearest. You see, a man like me in whom everything is still in a ferment, who feels that he was born to achieve something great and significant but something which, for the present, he can make sufficiently clear neither to himself nor to the world—such a man has, at twenty, every man's hand against him and is a burden and a laughing-stock to all the world. But believe me: it will not always be so! The germs of the future lie in us! The soil is being loosened even now by the budding shoots! Unseen to-day, we are the harvest of the future! We are the future! And the time will come when all this great and beautiful world will be ours!

Walburga. Ah, go on, Erich! What you say heals my heart.

Spitta. Walburga, I did more, last night! I flung straight out into my father's face, just as I felt it, my accusation of the crime committed against my sister. And that made the break definite and unbridgeable. He said stubbornly: He had no knowledge of such a daughter as I was describing. Such a daughter had no existence in his soul, and it seemed to him that his son would also soon cease to exist there. O these Christians! O these servants of the good shepherd who took the lost lamb with double tenderness into his arms! O thou good Shepherd, how have your words been perverted! How have your eternal truths been falsified into their exact contrary! But to-day when I sat amidst the flash of lightning and the roll of thunder in the *Tiergarten* and certain Berlin hyænas were prowling about me, I felt the crushed and restless soul of my sister close beside me. How many nights, in her poor life, may she not have sat shelterless on such benches perhaps on this very bench in the *Tiergarten*, in order to consider in her

loneliness, her degradation, her outcast estate, how, two thousand years after the birth of Christ, this most Christian world is drenched with Christianity and with the love of its fellowmen! But whatever she thought, this is what I think: the poor harlot, the wretched sinner who is yet above the righteous, who is weighed down by the sins of the world, the poor outcast and her terrible accusation shall never die in my soul! And into this flame of our souls we must cast all the wretchedness, all the lamentations of the oppressed and the disinherited! Thus shall my sister stay truly alive, Walburga, and effect noble ends before the face of God through the ethical impulse that lends wings to my soul, and that will be more powerful than all the evil, heartless parson's morality in the world.

Walburga. You were in the *Tiergarten* all night, Erich? Is that the reason why your hands are so icy cold, and why you look so utterly worn out? Erich, you must take my purse! No, please, you must! Oh, I assure you what is mine is yours! If you don't feel that, you don't love me. Erich, you're suffering! If you don't take my few pennies, I'll refuse all nourishment at home! By heaven, I'll do it, I'll do it, unless you're sensible about that!

Spitta. [*Chokes down his rising tears and sits down.*] I'm nervous; I'm overwrought.

Walburga. [*Puts her purse into his pocket.*] And you see, Erich, this is the real reason why I asked you to meet me here. To add to all my misfortunes I received yesterday this summons from the court.

Spitta. [*Regards a document which she hands to him.*] Look here? What's behind this, Walburga?

Walburga. I'm quite sure that it must have some connection with the stolen goods upstairs in the loft. But it does disquiet me terribly. If papa were to discover this . . . oh, what would I do then?

[*Mrs. JOHN enters, carrying the child in her arms. She is dressed for the street, and looks dusty and harassed.*]

Mrs. John. [*Frightened, suspicious.*] Well, what d'you want here? Is Paul home yet? I jus' went down in the street a little

with the baby. [*She carries the child behind the partition.*]

Walburga. Erich, do mention the summons to Mrs. John!

Mrs. John. Why, Paul's at home. There's his things!

Spitta. Miss Hassenreuter wanted very much to talk to you. She received a summons to appear in court. It's probably about those things that were stolen from the loft. You know.

Mrs. John. [*Emerging from behind the partition.*] What's that? You really got a summons, Miss Walburga? Well, then you better look out! I ain't jokin'. An' maybe you're thinkin' o' the black man!

Spitta. What you're saying there is quite incomprehensible, Mrs. John.

Mrs. John. [*Taking up her domestic tasks.*] Did you hear that 'way out in the Lauben settlement, beyond the Halle Gate, the lightenin' struck a man an' a woman an' a little girl o' seven this mornin'. It was right under a tall poplar tree.

Spitta. No, Mrs. John, we didn't hear that.

Mrs. John. The rain's splashin' down again.

[*One hears a shower of rain beginning to fall.*]

Walburga. [*Nervously.*] Come, Erich, let's get out into the open, anyhow.

Mrs. John. [*Speaking louder and louder in her incoherent terror.*] An' I tell you another thing: I was talking to the woman what was struck by lightenin' jus' a short time before. An' she says—now listen to me, Mr. Spitta—if you takes a dead child what's lyin' in its carriage an' pushes it out into the sun . . . but it's gotta be summer an' midday . . . it'll draw breath, it'll cry, it'll come back to life!—You don't believe that, eh? But I seen that with my own eyes! [*She circles about the room in a strange fashion, apparently becoming quite oblivious of the presence of the two young people.*]

Walburga. Look here, Mrs. John is positively uncanny! Let's go!

Mrs. John. [*Speaking still louder.*] You don't believe that, that it'll come to life again, eh? I tell you, its mother c'n come an' take it. But it's gotta be nursed right off.

Spitta. Good-bye, Mrs. John.

Mrs. John. [*In strange excitement accompanies the two young people to the door. Speaking still more loudly.*] You don't believe that! But it's the solemn truth, Mr. Spitta!

[*SPITTA and WALBURGA leave the room.*]

Mrs. John. [*Still holding the door in her hand calls out after them.*] Anybody that don't believe that don't know nothin' o' the whole secret that I discovered.

[*The foreman-mason JOHN appears in the door and enters at once.*]

John. Why, there you are, mother! I'm glad to see you. What's that there secret you're talkin' about?

Mrs. John. [*As though awakening, grasps her head.*] Me?—Did I say somethin' about a secret?

John. That you did unless I'm hard o' hearin'. An' it's reelly you unless it's a ghost.

Mrs. John. [*Surprised and frightened.*] Why d'you think I might be a ghost?

John. [*Pats his wife good-naturedly on the back.*] Come now, Jette, don't bite me. I'm reel glad, that I am, that you're here again with the little kid! [*He goes behind the partition.*] But it's lookin' a little measly.

Mrs. John. The milk didn't agree with him. An' that's because out there in the country the cows is already gettin' green fodder. I got milk here from the dairy company that comes from dry fed cows.

John. [*Reappears in the main room.*] That's what I'm sayin'. Why did you have to go an' take the child on the train an' outa town. The city is healthier. That's my notion.

Mrs. John. I'm goin' to stay at home now, Paul.

John. In Hamburg everythin' is settled, too. To-day at noon I'm goin' to meet Karl an' then he'll tell me when I c'n start workin' for the new boss!—Look here: I brought somethin' with me, too. [*He takes a small child's rattle from his breeches pocket and shakes it.*]

Mrs. John. What's that?

John. That's somethin' to bring a bit o' life into the place, 'cause it's pretty quiet inside in Berlin here! Listen how the kid's crowin'. [*The child is heard making happy little noises.*] I tell you, mother, when a

little kid goes on that way—there ain't nothin' I'd take for it!

Mrs. John. Have you seen anybody yet?

John. No!—Leastways only Quaquaro early this mornin'.

Mrs. John. [*In timid suspense.*] Well . . . ?

John. Oh, never mind! Nothin'! There was nothin' to it.

Mrs. John. [*As before.*] What did he say?

John. What d'you think he said? But if you're bound to know—'tain't no use talkin' o' such things Sunday mornin'—he axed me after Bruno again.

Mrs. John. [*Pale and speaking hastily.*] What do they say Bruno has done again?

John. Nothin'. Here, come'n drink a little coffee, Jette, an' don' get excited! It ain't your fault that you got a brother like that. We don't has to concern ourselves about other people.

Mrs. John. I'd like to know what an old fool like that what spies aroun' all day long has always gotta be talkin' about Bruno.

John. Jette, don' bother me about Bruno—You see . . . aw, what's the use . . . might as well keep still! . . . But if I was goin' to tell you the truth, I'd say that it wouldn't surprise me if some day Bruno'd come to a pretty bad end right out in the yard o' the gaol, too—a quick end. [*Mrs. John sits down heavily beside the table. She grows grey in the face and breathes with difficulty.*] Maybe not! Maybe not! Don't take it to heart so right off!—How's the sister?

Mrs. John. I don' know.

John. Why, I thought you was out there visitin' her?

Mrs. John. [*Looks at him absently.*] Where was I?

John. Well, you see, Jette, that's the way it is with you women! You're jus' shakin', but oh no—you don' want to go to no doctor! An' it'll end maybe by your havin' to take to your bed. That's what comes o' neglectin' nature.

Mrs. John. [*Throwing her arms about JOHN'S neck.*] Paul, you're goin' to leave me! For God's sake, tell me right out that it's so! Don' fool me aroun' an' cheat me! Tell me right out!

John. What's the matter with you to-day, Henrietta?

Mrs. John. [*Pulling herself together.*] Don' attend to my fool talk. I ain't had no rest all night—that's it. An' then I got up reel early, an' anyhow, it ain't nothin' but that I'm a bit weak yet.

John. Then you better lie down flat on your back an' rest a little. [*Mrs. John throws herself on the sofa and stares at the ceiling.*] Maybe you'd better comb yourself a bit afterwards, Jette!—It musta been mighty dusty on the train for you to be jus' covered all over with sand the way you are! [*Mrs. John does not answer but continues staring at the ceiling.*] I must go an' bring that there little feller into the light a bit. [*He goes behind the partition.*]

Mrs. John. How long has we been married, Paul?

John. [*Plays with the rattle behind the partition. Then answers.*] That was in eighteen hundred and seventy-two, jus' as I came back from the war.

Mrs. John. Then you came to father, didn't you? An' you assoomed a grand position an' you had the Iron Cross on the left side o' your chest.

John. [*Appears, swinging the rattle and carrying the child on its pillow. He speaks merrily.*] That's so, mother. An' I got it yet. If you want to see it, I'll pin it on.

Mrs. John. [*Still stretched out on the sofa.*] An' then you came to me an' you said that I wasn't to be so busy all the time . . . goin' up an' down, runnin' upstairs an' downstairs . . . that I was to be a bit more easygoin'.

John. An' I'm still sayin' that same thing to-day.

Mrs. John. An' then you tickled me with your moustache an' kissed me right behind my left ear. An' then . . .

John. Then it didn't take long for us to agree, eh?

Mrs. John. Yes, an' I laughed an', bit by bit, I looked at myself in every one o' your brass buttons. I was lookin' different then! An' then you said . . .

John. Well, mother, you're a great one for rememberin' things, I must say!

Mrs. John. An' then you said: When we has a boy, an' that'll be soon, he c'n follow the flag into the field too "with God for King an' country."

John. [*Sings to the child, playing with the rattle.*]

"To heaven he turns his glances bold
Whence gaze the hero sires of old:
The Rhine, the Rhine, the German
Rhine!" . . .

Well, an' now that I has a little feller like that I ain't half so keen on sendin' him to the war to be food for powder. [*He retires with the child behind the partition.*]

Mrs. John. [*Still staring at the ceiling.*] Paul, Paul! Seems as if all that was a hundred years ago!

John. [*Reappears from behind the partition without the child.*] Not as long ago as all that.

Mrs. John. Look here, what d'you think? How would it be if you was to take me an' the child an' go to America?

John. Now listen here, Jette! What's gotten into you, anyhow? What is it? Looks as if there was nothin' but ghosts aroun' me here! You know I has a good easy temper! When the workmen heave bricks at each other, I don't even get excited. An' what do they say? Paul has a comfortable nature. But now: what's this here? The sun's shinin'; it's bright daylight! I can't see nothin'; that's a fac'. But somethin's titterin' an' whisperin' an' creepin' aroun' in here. Only when I stretches out my hand I can't lay hold on nothin'! Now I wants to know what there is to this here story about the strange girl what came to the room. Is it true?

Mrs. John. You heard, Paul, that the young lady didn't come back no more. An' that shows you, don't it . . .

John. I hear what you're sayin'. But your lips is fair blue an' your eyes look as if somebody was tormentin' you.

Mrs. John. [*Suddenly changing her attitude.*] Yes. Why do you leave me alone year in an' year out, Paul? I sits here like in a cave an' I ain't got a soul to who I c'n say what I'm thinkin'. Many a time I've sat here an' axed myself why I works an' works, why I skimps an' saves to get together a few crowns, an' find good investments for your earnin's an' try to add to 'em. Why? Was all that to go to strangers? Paul, it's you who's been the ruin o' me. [*She lays her head on the table and bursts out in sobs.*]

[*Softly and with feline stealth*

BRUNO MECHELKE enters the room at this moment. He has

on his Sunday duds, a sprig of lilac in his hat and a great bunch of it in his hand. JOHN drums with his fingers on the window and does not observe him.]

Mrs. John. [*Has gradually realised BRUNO's presence as though he were a ghost.*] Bruno, is that you?

Bruno. [*Who has recognised JOHN in a flash, softly.*] Sure, it's me, Jette.

Mrs. John. Where d'you come from? What d'you want?

Bruno. I been dancin' all night, Jette! You c'n see, can't you, that I'm dam' jolly?

John. [*Has been staring steadily at BRUNO. A dangerous pallor has overspread his face. He now goes slowly to a small cupboard, takes out an old army revolver and loads it.* Mrs. JOHN does not observe this.] You! Listen! I'll tell you somethin'—somethin' you forgot, maybe. There ain't no reason on God's earth why I shouldn't pull this here trigger! You scoundrel! You ain't fit to be among human bein's! I told you . . . las' fall it was . . . that I'd shoot you down if I ever laid eyes on you in my home again! Now go . . . or I'll . . . shoot. Y'understan'?

Bruno. Aw, I ain't scared o' your jelly squirter.

Mrs. John. [*Observes that JOHN, losing control of himself, is slowly approaching BRUNO with the weapon and raising it.*] Then kill me too, Paul. 'Cause he's my brother.

John. [*Looks at her long, seems to awaken and change his mind.*] All right. [*He replaces the revolver carefully in the cupboard.*] You're right, anyhow, Jette! It's hell, Jette, that your name's got to be on the tongue of a crittur like that. All right. The powder'd be too good too. This here little pistol's tasted the blood o' two French cavalry men! Heroes they was! An' I don't want it to drink no dirt.

Bruno. I ain't doubtin' that there's dirt in your head! An' if it hadn't been that you board with my sister here I'd ha' let the light into you long ago, you dirt eater, so you'd ha' bled for weeks.

John. [*With tense restraint.*] Tell me again, Jette, that it's your brother.

Mrs. John. Go, Paul, will you? I'll get him away all right! You know's well as I

that I can't help it now that Bruno's my own brother.

John. All right. Then I'm one too many here. You c'n bill an' coo. [*He is dressed for the street as it is and hence proceeds to go. Close by BRUNO he stands still.*] You scamp! You worried your father into his grave. Your sister might better ha' let you starve behind some fence rather'n raise you an' litter the earth with another criminal like you. I'll be back in half an hour! But I won't be alone. I'll have the sergeant with me! [*He leaves by the outer door, putting on his slouch hat.*]

[*So soon as JOHN has disappeared BRUNO turns and spits out after him toward the door.*]

Bruno. If I ever gets hold o' you!

Mrs. John. Why d'you come, Bruno? Tell me, what's the matter?

Bruno. Tin's what you gotta give me. Or I'll go to hell.

Mrs. John. [*Locks and latches the outer door.*] Wait till I close the door! Now, what's the matter? Where d'you come from? Where has you been?

Bruno. Oh, I danced about half the night an' then, about sunrise, I went out into the country for a bit.

Mrs. John. Did Quaquaro see you comin' in, Bruno? Then you better look out that you ain't walked into no trap.

Bruno. No danger. I crossed the yard an' then went through the cellar o' my friend what deals in junk an' after that up through the loft.

Mrs. John. Well, an' what happened?

Bruno. Don' fool aroun', Jette. I gotta have railroad fare. I gotta take to my heels or I'll go straight to hell.

Mrs. John. An' what did you do with that there girl?

Bruno. Oh, I found a way, Jette!

Mrs. John. What's the meanin' o' that?

Bruno. Oh, I managed to make her a little more accommodatin' all right!

Mrs. John. An' is it a sure thing that she won't come back now?

Bruno. Sure. I don' believe that she'll come again! But that wasn't no easy piece of work, Jette. But I tell you . . . gimme somethin' to drink—quick! . . . I tell you, you made me thirsty with your damned

business—thirsty, an' hot as hell. [*He drains a jug full of water.*]

Mrs. John. People saw you outside the door with the girl.

Bruno. I had to make a engagement with Arthur. She didn't want to have nothin' to do with me. But Arthur, he came dancin' along in his fine clothes an' he managed to drag her along to a bar. She swallowed the bait right down when he told her as how her intended was waitin' for her there. [*He trills out, capering about convulsively.*]

"All we does in life's to go

Up an' down an' to an' fro

From a tap-room to a show!"

Mrs. John. Well, an' then?

Bruno. Then she wanted to get away 'cause Arthur said that her intended had gone off! Then I wanted to go along with her a little bit an' Arthur an' Adolph, they came along. Next we dropped in the ladies' entrance at Kalinich's an' what with tastin' a lot o' toddy an' other liquors she got good an' tipsy. An' then she staid all night with a woman what's Arthur's sweetheart. All next day there was always two or three of us boys after her, didn't let her go, an' played all kinds o' tricks, an' things got jollier an' jollier.

[*The church bells of the Sunday morning services begin to ring.*]

Bruno. [*Goes on.*] But the money's gone. I needs crowns an' pennies, Jette.

Mrs. John. [*Rummaging for money.*] How much has you got to have?

Bruno. [*Listening to the bells.*] What?

Mrs. John. Money!

Bruno. The old bag o' bones in the junk shop downstairs was thinkin' as how I'd better get across the Russian frontier! Listen, Jette, how the bells is ringin'.

Mrs. John. Why do you has to get acrost the frontier?

Bruno. Take a wet towel, Jette, an' put a little vinegar on it. I been bothered with this here dam' nosebleed all night.

[*He presses his handkerchief to his nose.*]

Mrs. John. [*Breathing convulsively, brings a towel.*] Who was it scratched your wrist into shreds that way?

Bruno. [*Listening to the bells.*] Half past three o'clock this mornin' she could ha' heard them bells yet.

Mrs. John. O Jesus, my Saviour! That ain't true! That can't noways be possible!

I didn't tell you nothin' like that, Bruno! Bruno, I has to sit down. Oh! [*She sits down.*] That's what our father foretold to me on his dyin' bed.

Bruno. It ain't so easy jokin' with me. If you go to see Minna, jus' tell her that I got the trick o' that kind o' thing an' that them goin's on with Karl an' with Fritz has to stop.

Mrs. John. But, Bruno, if they was to catch you!

Bruno. Well, then I has to swing, an' out at the Charity hospital they got another stiff to dissect.

Mrs. John. [*Giving him money.*] Oh, that ain't true. What did you do, Bruno?

Bruno. You're a crazy old crittur, Jette. — [*He puts his hand on her not without a tremor of emotion.*] You always says as how I ain't good for nothin'. But when things can't go on no more, then you needs me, Jette.

Mrs. John. Well, but how? Did you threaten the girl that she wasn't to let herself be seen no more? That's what you ought to ha' done, Bruno! An' did you?

Bruno. I danced with her half the night. An' then we went out on the street. Well, a gentleman came along, y'understand? Well, when I told him that I had some little business o' my own to transact with the lady an' pulled my brass-knuckles outa my breeches, o' course he took to his heels. — Then I says to her, says I: Don't you be scared. If you're peaceable an' don' make no outcry an' don' come no more to my sister axin' after the child—well, we c'n make a reel friendly bargain. So she toddled along with me a ways.

Mrs. John. Well, an' then?

Bruno. Well, she didn't want to! An' all of a sudden she went for my throat that I thought it'd be the end o' me then an' there! Like a dawg she went for me hot an' heavy! An' then . . . then I got a little bit excited too—an' then, well . . . that's how it come . . .

Mrs. John. [*Sunk in horror.*] What time d'you say it was?

Bruno. It must ha' been somewhere between three an' four. The moon had a big ring aroun' it. Out on the square there was a dam' cur behind the planks what got up an' howled. Then it began to drip an' soon a thunderstorm came up.

Mrs. John. [*Changed and with sudden self-mastery.*] It's all right. Go on. She don' deserve no better.

Bruno. Good-bye. I s'pose we ain't goin' to see each other for years an' years.

Mrs. John. Where you goin' to?

Bruno. First of all I gotta lie flat on my back for a couple o' hours. I'm goin' to Fritz's. He's got a room for rent in the old police station right acrost from the Fisher's Bridge. I'm safe there all right. If there's anythin' of a outcry you c'n lemme know.

Mrs. John. Don' you want to take a peek at the child onct more?

Bruno. [*Trembling.*] Naw!

Mrs. John. Why not?

Bruno. No, Jette, not in this here life! Good-bye, Jette. Hol' on a minute: Here I got a horseshoe. [*He puts the horseshoe on the table.*] I found it. That'll bring you good luck. I don' need it.

[*Stealthily as he has come, BRUNO MECHELKE also disappears. MRS. JOHN, her eyes wide with horror, stares at the spot where he stood. Then she totters backward a few paces, presses her hands, clenched convulsively as if in prayer, against her mouth, and collapses, still trying in vain to stammer out a prayerful appeal to heaven.*]

Mrs. John. I ain't no murderer! I ain't no murderer! I didn't want that to happen!

ACT FIVE

JOHN'S room. MRS. JOHN is asleep on the sofa. WALBURGA and SPITTA enter from the outer hall. The loud playing of a military band is heard from the street.

Spitta. No one is here.

Walburga. Oh, yes, there is, Erich. Mrs. John! She's asleep here.

Spitta. [*Approaching the sofa together with WALBURGA.*] Is she asleep? So she is! I don't understand how anyone can sleep amidst this noise.

[*The music of the band trails off into silence.*]

Walburga. Oh, Erich, sh! I have a perfect horror of the woman. Can you understand anyhow why policemen are guarding

the entrance downstairs and why they won't let us go out into the street? I'm so awfully afraid that, maybe, they'll arrest us and take us along to the station.

Spitta. Oh, but there's not the slightest danger Walburga! You're seeing ghosts by broad daylight.

Walburga. When the plain clothes man came up to you and looked at us and you asked him who he was and he showed his badge under his coat, I assure you, at that moment, the stairs and the hall suddenly began to go around with me.

Spitta. They're looking for a criminal, Walburga. It is a so-called raid that is going on here, a kind of man hunt such as the criminal police is at times obliged to undertake.

Walburga. And you can believe me, too, Erich, that I heard papa's voice. He was talking quite loudly to some one.

Spitta. You are nervous. You may have been mistaken.

Walburga. [*Frightened at MRS. JOHN, who is speaking in her sleep.*] Listen to her: do!

Spitta. Great drops of sweat are standing on her forehead. Come here! Just look at the rusty old horseshoe that she is clapping with both hands.

Walburga. [*Listens and starts with fright again.*] Papa!

Spitta. I don't understand you. Let him come, Walburga. The essential thing is that one knows what one wants and that one has a clean conscience. I am ready. I long for the explanation to come about.

[*A loud knocking is heard at the door.*]

Spitta. [*Firmly.*] Come in!

[*MRS. HASENREUTER enters, more out of breath than usual. An expression of relief comes over her face as she catches sight of her daughter.*]

Mrs. Hassenreuter. Thank God! There you are, children! [*Trembling, WALBURGA throws herself into her mother's arms.*] Girlie, but what a fright you've given your old mother.

[*A pause in which only the breathing of MRS. HASENREUTER is heard.*]

Walburga. Forgive me, mama: I couldn't act differently.

Mrs. Hassenreuter. Oh, no! One doesn't

write letters containing such thoughts to one's own mother. And especially not to a mother like me. If your soul is in pain you know very well that you can always count on me for help and counsel. I'm not a monster, and I was young myself once. But to threaten to drown yourself . . . and things like that . . . no, that's all wrong. You shouldn't have done that. Surely you agree with me, Mr. Spitta. And now this very minute . . . heavens, how you both look! . . . this very minute you must both come home with me!—What's the matter with Mrs. John?

Walburga. Oh yes, help us! Don't forsake us! Take us with you, mama! Oh, I'm so glad that you're here! I was just paralysed with fright!

Mrs. Hassenreuter. Very well, then. Come along. That would be the last straw if one had to be prepared for such desperate follies from you, Mr. Spitta, or from this child! At your age one should have courage. If everything doesn't go quite smoothly you have no right to think of expedients by which one has nothing to gain and everything to lose. We live but once, after all.

Spitta. Oh, I have courage! And I'm not thinking of putting an end to myself as one who is weary and defeated . . . unless Walburga is refused to me. In that case, to be sure, my determination is firm. It doesn't in the least undermine my belief in myself or in my future that I am poor for the present and have to take my dinner occasionally in the people's kitchen. And I am sure Walburga is equally convinced that a day must come that will indemnify us for all the dark and difficult hours of the present.

Mrs. Hassenreuter. Life is long; and you're almost children to-day. It's not so very bad for a student to have to take an occasional meal in the people's kitchen. It would be much worse, however, for Walburga as a married woman. And I hope for the sake of you both that you'll wait till something in the nature of a hearthstone of your own with the necessary wood and coal can be founded. In the meantime I've succeeded in persuading papa to a kind of truce. It wasn't easy and it might have been impossible had not this morning's mail brought the news of

his definitive appointment as manager of the theatre at Strassburg.

Walburga. [*Joyously.*] Oh, mama, mama! That is a ray of sunshine, isn't it?

Mrs. John. [*Sits up with a start.*] Bruno!

Mrs. Hassenreuter. [*Apologising.*] Oh, we've wakened you, Mrs. John.

Mrs. John. Is Bruno gone?

Mrs. Hassenreuter. Who? Who's Bruno?

Mrs. John. Why, Bruno! Don't you know Bruno?

Mrs. Hassenreuter. Ah, yes, yes! That's the name of your brother.

Mrs. John. Was I asleep?

Spitta. Fast asleep. But you cried out aloud in your sleep just now.

Mrs. John. Did you see, Mr. Spitta, how them boys out in the yard threw stones at my little Adelbert's wee grave? But I got after 'em, eh? An' they wasn't no bad slaps neither what I dealt out.

Mrs. Hassenreuter. It seems that you've been dreaming of your first little boy who died, Mrs. John.

Mrs. John. No, no; all that's fac'! I ain't been dreamin'. An' then I took little Adelbert an' I went with him to the registrar's office.

Mrs. Hassenreuter. But if your little boy's no longer alive . . . how could you . . .

Mrs. John. Aw, when a little child is onct born, it don't matter if it's dead . . . it's still right inside o' its mother. Did you hear that dawg howlin' behind the board fence? An' the moon had a big ring aroun' it! Bruno, you ain't doin' right!

Mrs. Hassenreuter. [*Shaking Mrs. JOHN.*] Wake up, my good woman! Wake up, Mrs. John! You are ill! Your husband ought to take you to see a physician.

Mrs. John. Bruno, you ain't doin' right! [*The bells are ringing again.*] Ain't them the bells?

Mrs. Hassenreuter. The service is over, Mrs. John.

Mrs. John. [*Wholly awake now, stares about her.*] Why does I wake up? Why didn't you take an ax when I was asleep an' knock me over the head with it?—What did I say? Sh! Only don't tell a livin' soul a word, Mrs. Hassenreuter. [*She jumps up and arranges her hair by the help of many hairpins.* MANAGER HASSEN-

REUTER appears in the doorway.

Hassenreuter. [*Starting at the sight of his family.*]

"Behold, behold, Timotheus,

Here are the cranes of Ibicus!"

Didn't you tell me there was a shipping agent's office in the neighbourhood, Mrs. John—[*To WALBURGA.*] Ah, yes, my child! While, with the frivolousness of youth you have been thinking of your pleasure and nothing but your pleasure, your papa has been running about for three whole hours again purely on business.—[*To SPITTA.*] You wouldn't be in such a hurry to establish a family, young man, if you had the least suspicion how hard it is—a struggle from day to day—to get even the wretched, mouldy necessary bit of daily bread for one's wife and child! I trust it will never be your fate to be suddenly hurled one day, quite penniless, into the underworld of Berlin and be obliged to struggle for a naked livelihood for yourself and those dear to you, breast to breast with others equally desperate, in subterranean holes and passages! But you may all congratulate me! A week from now we will be in Strassburg. [*MRS. HASSENREUTER, WALBURGA and SPITTA all press his hand.*] Everything else will be adjusted.

Mrs. Hassenreuter. You have fought an heroic battle for us during these past years, papa. And you did it without stooping to anything unworthy.

Hassenreuter. It was a fight like that of drowning men who struggle for planks in the water. My noble costumes, made to body forth the dreams of poets, in what dens of vice, on what reeking bodies have they not passed their nights—*odi profanum vulgus*—only that a few pennies of rental might clatter in my cashbox! But let us turn to more cheerful thoughts. The freight waggon, alias the cart of Thespis, is at the door in order to effect the removal of our Penates to happier fields.—[*Suddenly turning to SPITTA.*] My excellent Spitta, I demand your word of honour that, in your so-called despair, you two do not commit some irreparable folly. In return I promise to lend my ear to any utterances of yours characterised by a modicum of good sense.—Finally: I've come to you, Mrs. John, firstly because the officers bar all the exits and

will permit no one to go out; and secondly because I would like exceedingly to know why a man like myself, at the very moment when his triumphant flag is fluttering in the wind again, should have become the object of a malicious newspaper report!

Mrs. Hassenreuter. Dear Harro, Mrs. John doesn't understand you.

Hassenreuter. Aha! Then let us begin *ab ovo*. I have letters here [*he shows a bundle of them*] one, two, three, five—about a dozen! In these letters unknown but malicious individuals congratulate me upon an event which is said to have taken place in my storage loft. I would pay no attention to these communications were they not confirmed by a news item in the papers according to which a newborn infant is said to have been found in the loft of a costumer in the suburbs . . . a costumer, forsooth! I would have said nothing, I repeat, if this item had not perplexed me. Undoubtedly there is a case of mistaken identity involved here. In spite of that, I don't like to have the report stick to me. Especially since this cub of a reporter speaks of the costumer as being a bankrupt manager of barn stormers. Read it, mama: "The Stork Visits Costumer." I'll box that fellow's ears! This evening my appointment at Strassburg is to be made public in the papers and at the same time I am to be offered as a kind of comic dessert *urbi et orbi*. As if it were not obvious that of all curses that of being made ridiculous is the worst!

Mrs. John. You say there's policemen at the door downstairs, sir?

Hassenreuter. Yes, and their watch is so close that the funeral procession of Mrs. Knobbe's baby has been brought to a standstill. They won't even let the little coffin and the horrid fellow from the burial society who is carrying it go out to the carriage.

Mrs. John. What child's funeral was that?

Hassenreuter. Don't you know? It's the little son of Mrs. Knobbe which was brought up to me in so mysterious a way by two women and died almost under my very eyes, probably of exhaustion. *A propos* . . .

Mrs. John. The Knobbe woman's child is dead?

Hassenreuter. *A propos*, Mrs. John, I was

going to say that you ought really to know how the affair of those two half-crazy women who got hold of the child finally ended?

Mrs. John. Well now, tell me, ain't it like the very finger o' God that they didn't take my little Adelbert an' that he didn't die?

Hassenreuter. Just why? I don't understand the logic of that. On the other hand, I have been asking myself whether the confused speeches of the Polish girl, the theft committed in my loft, and the milk bottle which Quaquaro brought down in a boot—whether all these things had not something to do with the notice in the papers.

Mrs. John. No, there ain't no connection between them things. Has you seen Paul, sir?

Hassenreuter. Paul? Ah yes; that's your husband. Yes, yes. Indeed I saw him in conversation with detective Puppe, who visited me too in connection with the theft.

[*JOHN enters.*]

John. Well, Jette, wasn't I right? This here thing's happened soon enough!

Mrs. John. What's happened?

John. D'you want me to go an' earn the thousand crown's reward what's offered accordin' to placards on the news pillars by the chief o' police's office for denouncin' the criminal?

Mrs. John. How's that?

John. Don't you know that all this manoeuvrin' o' police an' detectives is started on account o' Bruno?

Mrs. John. How so? Where? What is it? What's been started?

John. The funeral's been stopped an' two o' the mourners—queer customers they is, too—has been taken prisoner. Yes, sir! That's the pass things has come to, Mrs. Hassenreuter. I'm a man, sir, what's tied to a woman as has a brother what's bein' pursued by the criminal police an' by detectives because he killed a woman not far from the river under a lilac bush.

Hassenreuter. But my dear Mr. John: God forbid that that be true!

Mrs. John. That's a lie! My brother don't do nothin' like that.

John. Aw, don't he though, Jette? Mr. Hassenreuter, I was sayin' the other day what kind of a brother that is! [*He no-*

tices the bunch of lilacs and takes it from the table.] Look at this here! That there monster's been in my home! If he comes back I'll be the first one that'll take him, bound hand an' foot, an' deliver him up to justice! [*He searches through the whole room.*]

Mrs. John. You c'n tell dam' fools there's such a thing as justice. There ain't no justice, not even in heaven. There wasn't a soul here. An' that bit o' lilac I brought along from Hangelsberg where a big bush of it grows behind your sister's house.

John. Jette, you wasn't at my sister's at all. Quaquaro jus' told me that! They proved that at headquarters. You was seen in the park by the river . . .

Mrs. John. Lies!

John. An' 'way out in the suburbs where you passed the night in a harbour!

Mrs. John. What? D'you come into your own house to tear everythin' into bits?

John. All right! I ain't sorry that things has come to this. There ain't no more secrets between us here. I foretold all that.

Hassenreuter. [*Tense with interest.*] Did that Polish girl who fought like a lioness for Mrs. Knobbe's baby the other day ever show herself again?

John. She's the very one. She's the one what they pulled out o' the water this morning. An' I has to say it without bitin' my tongue off: Bruno Mechelke took that girl's life.

Hassenreuter. [*Quickly.*] Then she was probably his mistress?

John. Ask mother! I don't know about that! That's what I was scared of; that's the reason I rather didn't come home at all no more, that my own wife was loaded down with a crowd like that an' didn't have the strength to shake it off.

Hassenreuter. Come, children.

John. Why so? You jus' stay!

Mrs. John. You don't has to go an' open the windows an' cry out everythin' for all the world to hear! It's bad enough if fate's brought a misfortune like that on us. Go on! Make a noise about it if you want to. But you won't see me very soon again.

Hassenreuter. And you mean to say that that . . .

John. That's jus' what I'll do! Jus' that! I'll call in anybody as wants to know

—outa the street, offa the hall, the carpenter outa the yard, the boys an' the girls what takes their confirmation lessons—I'll call 'em all an' I'll tell 'em what a woman got into on account o' her fool love for her brother!

Hassenreuter. And so that good-looking girl who laid claim to the child is actually dead to-day?

John. Maybe she was good-lookin'. I don't know nothin' about that, whether she was pretty or ugly. But it's a fac' that she's lyin' in the morgue this day.

Mrs. John. I c'n tell you what she was! She was a common, low wench! She had dealin's with a Tyrolese feller that didn't want to have nothin' more to do with her an' she had a child by him. An' she'd ha' liked to kill that child while it was in her own womb. Then she came to fetch it with that Kielbacke what's been in prison eighteen months as a professional baby-killer. Whether she had any dealin's with Bruno, I don't know! Maybe so an' maybe not! An' anyhow, I don't see how it concerns me what Bruno's gone an' done.

Hassenreuter. So you *did* know the girl in question, Mrs. John?

Mrs. John. How so? I didn't know her a bit! I'm only sayin' what everybody as knows says about that there girl.

Hassenreuter. You're an honourable woman: you're an honourable man, Mr. John. This matter with your wayward brother is terrible enough as a fact, but it ought not seriously to undermine your married life, Stay honest and . . .

John. Not a bit of it! I don't stay with such people; not anywhere near 'em. [*He brings his fist down on the table, taps at the walls, stamps on the floor.*] Listen to the crackin'! Listen how the plasterin' comes rumblin' down behind the wall-paper! Everythin's rotten here, everythin's worm eaten! Everythin's undermined by varmint an' by rats an' by mice. [*He see-saws on a loose plank in the floor.*] Everythin' totters! Any minute the whole business might crash down into the cellar. —[*He opens the door.*] Selma! Selma! I'm goin' to pull outa here before the whole thing just falls together into a heap o' rubbish!

Mrs. John. What do you want o' Selma?

John. Selma is goin' to take that child

an' I'll go with 'em on the train an' take it out to my sister.

Mrs. John. You'll hear from me if you try that! Oh, you jus' try it!

John. Is my child to be brought up in surroundin's like this, an' maybe some day be driven over the roofs with Bruno an' maybe end in the penitentiary?

Mrs. John. [*Cries out at him.*] That ain't your child at all! Y'understan'?

John. 'S that so? Well, we'll see if an honest man can't be master o' his own child what's got a mother that's gone crazy an' is in the hands of a crowd of murderers. I'd like to see who's in the right there an' who's the stronger. Selma!

Mrs. John. I'll scream! I'll tear open the windows! Mrs. Hassenreuter, they wants to rob a mother o' her child! That's my right that I'm the mother o' my child! Ain't that my right? Ain't that so, Mrs. Hassenreuter? They're surroundin' me! They wants to rob me o' my rights! Ain't it goin' to belong to me what I picked up like refuse, what was lying on rags half-dead, an' I had to rub it an' knead it all I could before it began to breathe an' come to life slowly? If it wasn't for me, it would ha' been covered with earth these three weeks!

Hassenreuter. Mr. John, to play the part of an arbitrator between married people is not ordinarily my function. It's too thankless a task and one's experiences are, as a rule, too unhappy. But you should not permit your feeling of honour, justly wounded as, no doubt, it is, to hurry you into acts that are rash. For, after all, your wife is not responsible for her brother's act. Let her have the child! Don't increase the misery of it all by such hardness toward your wife as must hurt her most cruelly and unnecessarily.

Mrs. John. Paul, that child's like as if it was cut outa my own flesh! I bought that child with my blood. It ain't enough that all the world's after me an' wants to take it away from me; now you gotta join 'em an' do the same! That's the thanks a person gets! Why it's like a pack of hungry wolves aroun' me. You c'n kill me! But you can't touch my baby!

John. I comes home, Mr. Hassenreuter, only this mornin'. I comes home with all my tools on the train, jolly as c'n be. I

broke off all my connections in Hamburg. Even if you don' earn so much, says I to myself, you'd rather be with your family, an' take up your child in your arms a little, or maybe take it on your knee a little! That was about the way I was thinkin'!

Mrs. John. Paul! Here, Paul! [*She goes close up to him.*] You c'n tear my heart out if you want to! [*She stares long at him, then runs behind the partition, whence her loud weeping is heard.*]

[*SELMA enters from the hall. She is dressed in mourning garments and carries a little wreath in her hand.*]

Selma. What is I to do? You called me, Mr. John.

John. Put on your cloak, Selma. Ax your mother if you c'n go an' take a trip with me to Hangelsberg. You'll earn a bit o' money doin' it. All you gotta do is to take my child on your arm an' come along with me.

Selma. No, I ain't goin' to touch that child no more.

John. Why not?

Selma. No; I'm afraid, Mr. John! I'm that scared at the way mama an' the police lieutenant screamed at me.

Mrs. John. [*Appears.*] Why did they scream at you?

Selma. [*Crying vociferously.*] Officer Schierke even slapped my face.

Mrs. John. Well, I'll see about that . . . he oughta try that again.

Selma. I can't tell why that Polish girl took my little brother away. If I'd known that my little brother was goin' to die, I'd ha' jumped at her throat first. Now little Gundofried's coffin stands on the stairs. I believe mama has convulsions an' is lyin' down in Quaquaro's alcove. An' me they wants to take to the charity organisation, Mrs. John. [*She weeps.*]

Mrs. John. Then you c'n be reel happy. They can't treat you worse'n you was treated at home.

Selma. An' I gotta go to court! An' maybe they'll take me to gaol!

Mrs. John. On account o' what?

Selma. Because they says I took the child what the Polish girl had up in the loft an' carried it down to you.

Hassenreuter. So a child actually was born up there.

Selma. Certainly.

Hassenreuter. In whose loft?

Selma. Why, where them actors lives! It ain't none o' my business! How is I to know anythin' about it? All I c'n say is . . .

Mrs. John. You better hurry on about your business now, Selma! You got a clean conscience! You don't has to care for what people jabber.

Selma. An' I don't want to betray nothin' neither, Mrs. John.

John. [Grasps SELMA, who is about to run away, and holds her fast.] Naw, you ain't goin'! Here you stays! The truth! "I don't want to betray nothin'," you says. You heard that, too, Mrs. Hassenreuter? An' Mr. Spitta an' the young lady here heard it too. The truth! You ain't goin' to leave this here spot before I don't know the rights o' this matter about Bruno an' his mistress an' if you people did away with that child!

Mrs. John. Paul, I swear before God that I ain't done away with it!

John. Well . . . ? Out with what you know, girl! I been seein' for a long time that there's been some secret scheming between you an' my wife. There ain't no use no more in all that winkin' an noddin'. Is that child dead or alive?

Selma. No, that child is alive all right.

Hassenreuter. The one, you mean, that you carried down here under your apron or in some such way?

John. If it's dead you c'n be sure that you an' Bruno'll both be made a head shorter'n you are!

Selma. I'm tellin' you the child is alive.

Hassenreuter. But you said at first that you hadn't brought down any child at all.

John. An' you pretend to know nothin' o' that whole business, mother? [Mrs. JOHN stares at him; SELMA gazes helplessly and confusedly at Mrs. JOHN.] Mother, you got rid o' the child o' Bruno an' that Polish wench an' then, when people came after it, you went an' substitooted that little crittur o' Knobbe's.

Walburga. [Very pale and conquering her repugnance.] Tell me, Mrs. John, what happened on that day when I so foolishly took flight up into the loft at papa's coming? I'll explain that to you later, papa. On that occasion, as became clear to me

later, I saw the Polish girl twice: first with Mrs. John and then with her brother. Hassenreuter. You, Walburga?

Walburga. Yes, papa. Alice Rütterbusch was with you that day, and I had made an engagement to meet Erich here. He came to see you finally but failed to meet me because I kept hidden.

Hassenreuter. I can't say that I have any recollection of that.

Mrs. Hassenreuter. [To her husband.] The girl has really passed more than one sleepless night on account of this matter.

Hassenreuter. Well, Mrs. John, if you are inclined to attach any weight to the opinion of a former jurist who exchanged the law for an artistic career only after having been plucked in his bar examination—in that case let me assure you that, under the circumstances, ruthless frankness will prove your best defense.

John. Jette, where did you put that there child? The head detective told me—I jus' remember it now—that they're still huntin' aroun' for the child o' the dead woman! Jette, for God's sake, don't you have 'em suspect you o' layin' hands on that there newborn child jus' to get the proofs o' your brother's rascality outa the world!

Mrs. John. Me lay hands on little Adelbert, Paul?

John. Nobody ain't talkin' o' Adelbert here. [To SELMA.] I'll knock your head off for you if you don't tell me this minute what's become o' the child o' Bruno an' the Polish girl!

Selma. Why, it's behind your own partition, Mr. John!

John. Where is it, Jette?

Mrs. John. I ain't goin' to tell that.

[The child begins to cry.]

John. [To SELMA.] The truth! Or I'll turn you over to the police, y'understan'? See this rope? I'll tie you hand and foot!

Selma. [Involuntarily, in the extremity of her fear.] It's cryin' now! You know that child well enough, Mr. John.

John. Me?

[Utterly at sea he looks first at SELMA, then at HASSENREUTER. Suddenly a suspicion flashes upon him as he turns his gaze upon his wife. He believes that he is beginning to understand and wavers.]

Mrs. John. Don't you let a low down lie like that take you in, Paul! It'll all invented by the fine mother that girl has outa spite! Paul, why d'you look at me so?

Selma. That's low of you, mother John, that you wants to make me out so bad now. Then I won't be careful neither not to let nothin' out! You know all right that I carried the young lady's child down here an' put it in the nice, clean bed. I c'n swear to that! I c'n take my oath on that!

Mrs. John. Lies! Lies! You says that my child ain't my child!

Selma. Why, you ain't had no child at all, Mrs. John!

Mrs. John. [Embraces her husband's knees.] Oh, that ain't true at all!

John. You leave me alone, Henrietta! Don' dirty me with your hands!

Mrs. John. Paul, I couldn't do no different. I had to do that. I was deceived myself an' then I told you about it in my letter to Hamburg an' then you was so happy an' I couldn't disappoint you an' I thought: it's gotta be! We c'n has a child this way too an' then . . .

John. [With ominous calmness.] Lemme think it over, Jette. [He goes to the chest of drawers, opens a drawer and flings the baby linen and baby dresses that he finds therein into the middle of the room.] C'n anybody understan' how week after week, an' month after month, all day long an' half the nights she could ha' worked on this trash till her fingers was bloody?

Mrs. John. [Gathers up the linen and the dresses in insane haste and hides them carefully in the table drawer and elsewhere.] Paul, don' do that! You c'n do anythin' else! It's like tearin' the last rag offa my naked body!

John. [Stops, grasps his forehead and sinks into a chair.] If that's true, mother, I'll be too ashamed to show my face again. [He seems to sink into himself, crosses his arms over his head and hides his face.]

Hassenreuter. Mrs. John, how could you permit yourself to be forced into a course of so much error and deception? You've entangled yourself in the most frightful way! Come, children! Unhappily there is nothing more for us to do here.

John. [Gets up.] You might as well take me along with you, sir.

Mrs. John. Go on! Go on! I don' need you!

John. [Turning to her, coldly.] So you bargained for that there kid someway an' when its mother wanted it back you got Bruno to kill her?

Mrs. John. You ain't no husband o' mine! How could that be! You been bought by the police! You took money to give me up to my death! Go on, Paul, you ain't human even! You got poison in your eyes an' teeth like wolves'! Go on an' whistle so they'll come an' take me! Go on, I says! Now I see the kind o' man you is an' I'll despise you to the day o' judgment! [She is about to run from the room when policeman SCHIERKE and QUAQUARO appear.]

Schierke. Hold on! Nobody can't get outa this room.

John. Come right in, Emil! You c'n come in reel quiet, officer. Everythin's in order here an' all right.

Quaquaro. Don't get excited, Paul! This here don' concern you!

John. [With rising rage.] Did you laugh, Emil?

Quaquaro. Man alive, why should I? Only Mr. Schierke is to take that there little one to the orphan house in a cab.

Schierke. Yessir! That's right. Where is the child?

John. How is I to know where all the brats offa junk heaps that witches use in their doin's gets to in the end? Watch the chimney! Maybe it flew outa there on a broomstick.

Mrs. John. Paul!—Now it ain't to live! No, outa spite! Now it don' has to live! Now its gotta go down under the ground with me!

[With lightning-like rapidity she has run behind the partition and reappears at once with the child and makes for the door. HASENREUTER and SPITTA throw themselves in front of the desperate woman, intent on saving the child.]

Hassenreuter. Stop! I'll interfere now! I have the right to do so at this point! Whomever the little boy may belong to—so much the worse if its mother has been murdered—it was born on my premises! Forward, Spitta! Fight for it, my boy!

Here your propensities come properly into play! Go on! Careful! That's it! Bravo! Be as careful as though it were the Christ child! Bravo! That's it! You yourself are at liberty, Mrs. John. We don't restrain you. You must only leave us the little boy.

[Mrs. JOHN rushes madly out.]

Schierke. Here you stays!

Mrs. Hassenreuter. The woman is desperate. Stop her! Hold her!

John. [With a sudden change.] Look out for mother! Mother! Stop her! Catch hold o' her! Mother! Mother!

[SELMA, SCHIERKE and JOHN hurry after Mrs. JOHN. SPITTA, HASENREUTER, Mrs. HASENREUTER and WALBURGA busy themselves about the child, which lies on the table.]

Hassenreuter. [Carefully wrapping the infant.] The horrible woman may be desperate for all I care! But for that reason she needn't destroy the child.

Mrs. Hassenreuter. But, dearest papa, isn't it quite evident that the woman has pinned her love, silly to the point of madness as it is, to this very infant? Thoughtless and harsh words may actually drive the unhappy creature to her death.

Hassenreuter. I used no harsh words, mama.

Spitta. An unmistakable feeling assures me that the child has only now lost its mother.

Quaquaro. That's true. It's father ain't aroun' an' don' want to have nothin' to do with it. He got married yesterday to the widow of a man who owned a merry-go-round! Its mother was no better'n she should be! An' if Mrs. Kielbacke was to take care of it, it'd die like ten outa every dozen what she boards. The way things has come aroun' now—it'll have to die too.

Hassenreuter. Unless our Father above who sees all things has differently determined.

Quaquaro. D'you mean Paul, the mason? Not now! No sir! I knows him! He's a ticklish customer where his honour is concerned.

Mrs. Hassenreuter. Just look how the

child lies there! It's incomprehensible! Fine linen—even lace! Neat and sweet as a doll! It makes one's heart ache to think how suddenly it has become an utterly forlorn and forsaken orphan.

Spitta. Were I judge in Israel . . .

Hassenreuter. You would erect a monument to Mrs. John! It may well be that many an element of the heroic, much that is hiddenly meritorious, lurks in these obscure fates and struggles. But not even Kohlhaas of Kohlhaasenbrück with his mad passion for justice could fight his way through! Let us use practical Christianity! Perhaps we could permanently befriend the child.

Quaquaro. You better keep your hands offa that!

Hassenreuter. Why?

Quaquaro. Unless you're crazy to get rid o' money an' are anxious for all the worries an' the troubles you'll have with the public charities an' the police an' the courts.

Hassenreuter. For such things I have no time to spare, I confess.

Spitta. Won't you admit that a genuinely tragic fatality has been active here?

Hassenreuter. Tragedy is not confined to any class of society. I always told you that!

[SELMA, breathless, opens the outer door.]

Selma. Mr. John! Mr. John! Oh, Mr. John!

Mrs. Hassenreuter. Mr. John isn't here. What do you want, Selma?

Selma. Mr. John, you're to come out on the street!

Hassenreuter. Quiet, quiet now! What is the matter?

Selma. [Breathlessly]. Your wife . . . your wife . . . The whole street's crowded . . . 'buses an' tramcars . . . nobody can't get through . . . her arms is stretched out . . . your wife's lyin' on her face down there.

Mrs. Hassenreuter. Why, what has happened?

Selma. Lord! Lord God in Heaven! Mrs. John has killed herself.

THE END

LA MALQUERIDA

By JACINTO BENAVENTE

Translated from the Spanish by JOHN GARRETT UNDERHILL

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JACINTO BENAVENTE AND HIS PLAYS

JACINTO BENAVENTE, the author of *La Malquerida*, is not only the most distinguished of modern Spanish dramatists but is also one of the great original forces in modern drama. He was born in Madrid in 1866; studied law; travelled with a circus; became an actor; and mingled with persons of all sorts and degrees. Through his years of wandering he gathered much of that knowledge of life and the stage which characterize the prolific product that was to follow. With the production of his satirical comedy *The Governor's Lady* his fame was secure; and from that time he has continued to produce plays with all the fecundity characteristic of the Spanish genius. His popularity increased with the number of his plays. At length he was elected a member of the Spanish Academy, and, in 1922, was awarded the Nobel prize.

A variety of factors renders Benavente one of the most complex and perplexing, as well as one of the most interesting, of modern dramatists. Simply as a dramatist of new Spain, he is a product of the "movement of 1898" toward the creation of a national literature unfettered by tradition. But he is also a part of the general revolutionary movement in the theatre that in the late nineteenth century asserted itself in the experimental playhouses of Paris, Berlin, and London, the outcome of which was the sincerity that marks the work of Hauptmann in Germany, Brieux in France, and Shaw and Galsworthy in England. Thus it is not surprising that many foreign influences have affected the work of Benavente, and that certain of its multifarious phases are reminiscent, for instance, of the Italian, Pirandello, the Russian, Andrejev, and the Austrian, Schnitzler. But Benavente is not only modern and cosmopolitan; he is also the inheritor of the rich traditions of the Spanish theatre, and is certainly their debtor. Thus, as a man of the theatre simply, he is of both the new and the old. Again, in his capacity as a critic of life, while he cherishes essentially Spanish traditions and ideas, he yet maintains an outlook upon the world clear-eyed and characteristically modern. Finally, and as an additional factor in his complexity, his plays (there are almost a hundred of them) not only vastly outnumber those of any other great modern dramatist, but cover a wider range in technique, subject-matter, tone, and style than do those of any two or even three of his contemporaries. They include satirical comedies; romantic comedies; realistic dramas; romantic dramas; psychological plays, both realistic and fantastic; pure fantasies, tragic or comic; historical plays; moralistic plays; farces; fairy plays; and pageants. Here is represented every method of technique from naturalism to sheer fantasy; every social class from peasant to king; every tone from farce to tragedy.

Through it all, Benavente is supremely intellectual and utterly sophisticated. With all his purely theatrical dexterity, he is primarily the dramatist of character and ideas. His attitude toward life is usually that of the observer and analyst, accepting conditions without protest. This is as true of *The Governor's Lady* as of the witty yet profound searching of life's ultimate values in *The Bonds of Interest* and the stark human passion of *La Malquerida*. In his later plays he has become more of the avowed moralizer and propagandist.

La Malquerida is the representative drama of rural life in modern Spain. It is interesting to compare with this vivid piece another powerful Spanish play, *Marta of the Lowlands*, by the Catalan dramatist Angel Guimera; but no matter with what similar play of any country it be compared, *La Malquerida* holds its own. Though a drama of elemental passions, it is yet suffused with the spirit of the "new psychology". Powerful theatric situations are saved from being mere melodrama by the fact that they are essentially the inevitable expression of profound emotion, and hence are lifted up to the plane of authentic tragedy.

La Malquerida was first produced in Madrid in 1912, with Maria Guerrero in the rôle of Raimunda, and met with immediate and unqualified success. In 1920 it was produced in New York, under the title of *The Passion Flower*, and again was favorably received. In May, 1926, it was presented in Spanish in New York by Maria Guerrero.

CHARACTERS

RAIMUNDA

ACACIA, *daughter of* RAIMUNDA

JULIANA, *an old servant in RAIMUNDA'S household*

DOÑA ISABEL

MILAGROS, daughter of

DOÑA ISABEL

FIDELA

ENGRACIA

BERNABEA

GASPARA

ESTEBAN, husband of RAIMUNDA and step-
father of ACACIA

NORBERT, *cousin of ACACIA and her rejected suitor*

FAUSTINO, *the betrothed of* ACACIA

Tío EUSEBIA, *father of* FAUSTINO

BERNABÉ }
RUBIO } *employees on RAIMUNDA'S farm*

The action takes place in Castile at the present day

LA MALQUERIDA

ACT ONE

A room in a rich farmer's house, situated on the outskirts of a pueblo, or small town.

As the curtain rises, RAIMUNDA, ACACIA, DOÑA ISABEL, MILAGROS, FIDELA, ENGRACIA, GASPARA, and BERNABEA are bidding farewell to four or five women and young girls who are taking leave. While the others stand, DOÑA ISABEL remains seated.

Gaspara. God be with you! Good-by, Raimunda.

Bernabea. God be with you, Doña Isabel—and you, too, Acacia, and your mother. May everything turn out for the best.

Raimunda. Thanks. May we all live to see it. Go down with them, Acacia.

All. Good-by! Good-by!

[The women and girls retire, keeping up an animated chatter. ACACIA accompanies them.]

Doña Isabel. Bernabea is a nice girl.

Engracia. It is only a year since she got over that trouble. No one would ever believe it to look at her now.

Doña Isabel. I hear that she is going to be married.

Fidela. Yes, come next fiesta—God willing and San Roque.

Doña Isabel. I am always the last person in the village to pick up gossip. When you have nothing but trouble at home, naturally you lose interest in what is taking place outside.

Engracia. How is your husband?

Doña Isabel. He varies—up and down. The rest of us are thoroughly worn out. We are not able to leave the house, not even to attend mass upon Sundays. I am used to it myself, but it is hard on my daughter.

Engracia. I think you make a mistake to keep her at home so much. This is a great year for weddings.

Doña Isabel. But not for her. I am afraid that we shall never be able to find a man who measures up to her expectations.

Fidela. All the same, it never struck me that she was born to be a nun. Some day she will happen on the right one.

Doña Isabel. How are you pleased with this match, Raimunda? I must say you don't seem altogether cheerful about it.

Raimunda. A wedding is always something of an experiment.

Engracia. If you aren't satisfied, I am sure I don't know who could ever be. Your daughter has had the pick of the entire village.

Fidela. She's not likely to want for anything, either. We all know how well they will both be provided for, which is not a thing you can afford to overlook.

Raimunda. Milagros, run down-stairs and enjoy yourself with Acacia and the boys. I hate to see you sitting there all alone in a corner.

Doña Isabel. Yes, do go down.—The child is as innocent as the day that God made her.

Milagros. Excuse me.

Raimunda. We might all take another glass and some *lizcochos*.

Doña Isabel. Thanks, I have had enough.

Raimunda. No, no, come, everybody. This is nothing.

Doña Isabel. Acacia doesn't seem as happy as you might expect, either, considering that her engagement was only announced to-day.

Raimunda. She is as innocent, too, as God made her. I never saw any one like her; she is so silent. She distracts me. For weeks together she has not one word to say. Then there are times when she begins to talk, and her tongue runs until it fairly takes your breath away. It is a terrible thing to hear.

Engracia. Naturally, you have spoiled her. After you lost the three boys she was all that you had, and you were too careful. Her father would have plucked the birds out of the air if she had asked for them, and you were no better. When he died—God rest his soul—then the child was jealous of you. She didn't like it when you married again, and she has never gotten over that grudge either.

Raimunda. But what was I to do? I didn't want to marry again. I should never have thought of it if my brothers hadn't turned out the way that they did. If we had not had a man in the house to look after us, my

daughter and I would have been in the street before this, and you know it.

Doña Isabel. Yes, this world is no place for single women. You were left a widow very young.

Raimunda. But I can't see why my daughter should be jealous. I am her mother, yet it would be hard to say which of us loves or spoils her the most. Esteban has never treated her like a stepdaughter.

Doña Isabel. No wonder; you had no children of your own.

Raimunda. He never comes nor goes without bringing her a present. He never thinks of such a thing with me—although, of course, I have no feeling. She is my daughter; it only makes me love him more to see how fond he is of her. You won't believe it when I tell you, but she would never let him kiss her even when she was a child, much less now. I have seldom had to lay my hand on her, but whenever I have, it was on that account.

Fidela. Nobody can make me believe, just the same, that your daughter isn't in love with her cousin.

Raimunda. Norbert? She turned him off herself between night and morning, and that was the end of it. That is another thing I can't understand. We never could find out what did happen between them.

Fidela. Nor anybody else. Nobody has ever been able to explain it. There must have been some reason, but what it was is a mystery.

Engracia. Well, she never seemed to regret it, which is more than I can say for him. She never looked at him again, but he hasn't changed. When he heard that Faustino was coming over with his father to-day to settle the matter and arrange things, he turned on his heel, took his gun, and went straight up to Los Berrocales. People who saw him said that you would have thought that it had broken his heart.

Raimunda. Neither Esteban nor I influenced her in the least. She broke with Norbert herself, just as they were ready to publish the banns. Everybody knows it. Then she consented to see Faustino. He always had a fancy for her. His father is a great friend of Esteban's—they belong to the same party and always work together. They have known each other for a long time. Whenever we went to Encinar for the Feast of the Virgin—or for any other fiesta—or if they were the ones who

came here, it was easy to see that the boy was nervous. When she was around he didn't know what to do. He knew that there was something between her and her cousin, but he never said one word until the break came, whatever the reason was, which we don't know—no, not one; but as soon as they heard that she was done with her cousin, Faustino's father spoke to Esteban, and Esteban spoke to me, and I spoke to my daughter, and she seemed to be pleased; so now they are going to be married. That is all there is to it. If she is not satisfied, then God have mercy on her soul, because we are only doing it to please her. She has had her own way in everything.

Doña Isabel. Then she ought to be happy. Why not? The boy is a fine fellow. Everybody says so.

Engracia. Yes, we all feel as if he belonged in the village. He lives so near by, and his family is so well known that nobody ever thinks of them as strangers.

Fidela. Tío Eusebio owns more land here than at Encinar.

Engracia. Certainly, if you stop to count. He inherited everything from his Uncle Manolito, and when the town lands were sold, two years ago, they went to him.

Doña Isabel. The family is the richest in the neighborhood.

Fidela. Undoubtedly. There may be four brothers, but each of them will come into a fortune.

Engracia. Your daughter is not going barefoot, either.

Raimunda. No, she is an only child and will inherit everything. Esteban has taken good care of the farm which she had from her father; he could not have done more if she had been his own child.

[*The Angelus sounds.*]

Doña Isabel. The Angelus! [*The women mumble the words of the prayer.*] It is time for us to be going, Raimunda. Telesforo expects his supper early—if the nibble of nothing which he takes can be called supper.

Engracia. It is time for us all to go.

Fidela. We were all thinking the same thing.

Raimunda. But won't you stay to supper? I don't urge Doña Isabel—I know she ought not to leave her husband. He is impatient to see her back.

Engracia. Yes. We all have husbands to look after. Thanks just the same.

Doña Isabel. I suppose the young man stays to supper?

Raimunda. No, he is going home with his father to Encinar. They cannot spend the night. There is no moon, so they should have been on the road long ago. It is getting late and the days are growing shorter. Before you know it, it is black night.

Engracia. I hear them coming up now to say good-by.

Raimunda. I thought so.

[ACACIA, MILAGROS, ESTEBAN, Tío EUSEBIO, and FAUSTINO enter.]

Esteban. Raimunda, here are Tío Eusebio and Faustino to say good-by.

Eusebio. We must be off before dark. The roads are in terrible shape after the heavy rains.

Esteban. There are some bad stretches.

Doña Isabel. Well, what has the boy to say for himself? I suppose he doesn't remember me. It is five years since I have seen him.

Eusebio. Don't you remember Doña Isabel?

Faustino. I do, *si señor*. I was afraid she didn't remember me.

Doña Isabel. No fear of that! My husband was *alcalde* at the time, when you gave us that awful fright, running after the bull. If you had been killed, I don't know what would have happened. I didn't enjoy it. God help San Roque!—it would have put an end to his fiesta. We certainly thought you were dead.

Engracia. Julian, Eudosa's husband, was caught that year too.

Faustino. I remember; *si, señora*.

Eusebio. He remembers perfectly, because I gave him a sound thrashing when he got home—which he deserved.

Faustino. I was a boy at the time.

Doña Isabel. Yes—the boy of it! However, you have picked out the finest girl in the village, and she will have no reason to regret her choice either. But we must be going. You have business of your own to attend to.

Esteban. No, they have attended to everything already.

Doña Isabel. Good night, then. Come, Milagros.

Acacia. I want her to stay to supper, but she is afraid to ask you. Do let her stay, Doña Isabel!

Raimunda. Yes, do. Bernabé and Juliana will see her home afterward, and Esteban can go along, too, if necessary.

Doña Isabel. No, we will send for her. You can stay, to please Acacia.

Raimunda. They have so many things to talk over.

Doña Isabel. God be with you. Adios, Tío Eusebio and Esteban.

Eusebio. Adios, Doña Isabel. My best sympathy to your husband.

Doña Isabel. Which he appreciates, coming from you.

Engracia. Good-by! A safe return!

Fidela. God be with you!

[*The women go out.*]

Eusebio. Doña Isabel looks remarkably young. She must be my age at least. Well, "To have and to hold is to prepare to grow old," as the proverb has it. Doña Isabel was one of the best of them in her day, and in her day there were plenty.

Esteban. Sit down, Tío Eusebio. What is your hurry?

Eusebio. No, don't tempt me; it's time to go. Night is coming on. Don't bother about us. We have the hands along and shan't need you.

Esteban. No, the walk will do me good. I'll see you to the *arroyo* at least.

[RAIMUNDA, ACACIA, and MILAGROS re-enter.]

Eusebio. If you young folks have anything to say, now is the time for you to say it.

Acacia. No, we have settled everything.

Eusebio. So you think.

Raimunda. Come, come! Don't you try to embarrass my daughter, Tío Eusebio.

Acacia. Thanks for everything.

Eusebio. What? Is that a way to thank me?

Acacia. It was a lovely present.

Eusebio. The showiest thing we could find.

Raimunda. Entirely too much so for a farmer's daughter.

Eusebio. Too much? Not a bit of it! If I'd had my way, it would have had more jewels in it than the Holy Monstrance at Toledo. Give your mother-in-law a good hug.

Raimunda. Yes, come, boy. I must learn to love you or I shall never forgive you for taking her away. My heart goes with her.

Esteban. Now don't begin to cry! Come, Acacia! You don't want to pass yourself off for a Magdalen.

Milagros. Raimunda! Acacia! [*Bursts into tears also.*]

Esteban. That's right—all together! Come, come!

Eusebio. Don't be foolish! Tears are for the dead. You are only going to be married. Try to be happy and enjoy yourselves; everybody is willing. Adios and good night!

Raimunda. Adios, Tío Eusebio. Tell Julia that I don't know whether I shall ever be able to forgive her for not coming over to-day.

Eusebio. You know how bad her sight is. We'd have had to hitch up the cart, and it was up at Los Berrocales. We are beginning to slaughter.

Raimunda. Tell her how sorry I am. May she be better soon.

Eusebio. Thanks to you.

Raimunda. Now you had better be going. It is getting dark. [*To ESTEBAN.*] Don't be long.

Eusebio. I tell him not to come.

Esteban. Nonsense! It isn't any trouble. I'll go as far as the *arroyo*. Don't wait supper for me.

Raimunda. No, we will wait. We're not anxious to eat alone to-night. Milagros won't mind if we are late.

Milagros. It makes no difference to me.

Eusebio. God be with you all! Good-by!

Raimunda. No, we are coming down to see you out.

Faustino. I. . . I have something to say to Acacia first. . . .

Eusebio. It will have to wait until to-morrow. You have had the whole day to yourselves.

Faustino. Yes, but with so many people around, I had no chance. . . .

Eusebio. Before we were through I knew we were going to get some of this nonsense.

Faustino. It isn't nonsense. Only I promised mother before we started to give Acacia this scapulary. The nuns in the convent made it on purpose for her.

Acacia. How lovely!

Milagros. Oh! The Blessed Virgin of Carmen—with spangles all over!

Raimunda. Very pretty. My daughter was always devoted to the Virgin. Thank your mother for us. We appreciate it.

Faustino. It has been blessed.

Eusebio. Good! Now you have got that off your mind. I wonder what your mother would have thought if we'd taken it home again with us? I never saw such a boy! I wasn't so backward in my day. I am sure I don't know whom he does take after.

[*All go out. For a moment the stage*

remains deserted. Meanwhile it continues to grow darker. Presently RAIMUNDA, ACACIA, and MILAGROS reappear.]

Raimunda. They have made a long day of it. It is night before they start. How do you feel, my dear? Are you happy?

Acacia. You can see for yourself.

Raimunda. I can, can I? That is exactly what I want to do: see for myself. Nobody can ever tell how you feel.

Acacia. I am tired out.

Raimunda. It has certainly been a long day. I haven't had a minute's rest since five o'clock in the morning.

Milagros. Everybody has been here to congratulate you.

Raimunda. The whole village, you might say, beginning with the priest, who was among the first. We paid him for a mass, and gave him ten loaves of bread besides for the poor. In our happiness it is only right to remember others who are not so fortunate. Praise God, we want for nothing! Where are the matches?

Acacia. Here they are, mother.

Raimunda. Light the lamp, dear. It makes me feel sad to sit in the dark. [*Calling.*] Juliana! Juliana! I wonder where she is?

Juliana. [*Down-stairs.*] What do you want?

Raimunda. Bring up the broom and dustpan.

Juliana. [*Down-stairs.*] In a minute.

Raimunda. I had better change my skirt while I think of it. Nobody will be in now; it's so late.

Acacia. I might take off my dress.

Raimunda. What for? There is nothing for you to do. You have been busy all day.

[*JULIANA enters.*]

Juliana. Show me that dust—

Raimunda. Stand the broom in the corner and take these things away. Mind you scour them until they are clean; then put them back in the cupboard. Be careful with those glasses! They are our best.

Juliana. Could I eat a cake?

Raimunda. Of course you can!—though I don't see how you manage to hold so much.

Juliana. I haven't touched a thing this whole day, God help me! I am my mother's own daughter. Haven't I passed cake and wine to the entire village? Everybody has been here to-day. That shows you what people think of this house—yes, and what

they think of Tío Eusebio and his family. Wait till you see the wedding! I know somebody who is going to give her a new gold piece, and somebody who is going to give her a silk embroidered quilt that has flowers all over it, so lifelike that the first thing she will want to do is pick them off of it. That will be a great day for her, praise God! Not one of us but will laugh and cry then, and I will be the first—after her mother; she will be first because it is her right, but you know me. I love you all in this house. Besides, you make me think of my dead daughter. She looked just like you do when she died, and we buried her.

Raimunda. Never mind that, Juliana. Go along and don't dig up any more of your troubles. We have enough of our own already.

Juliana. God grant that I may never be a trouble to you! But everything goes topsyturvy with me to-day, around and around, and every which way. The more you enjoy yourself the sadder it makes you feel. God forbid that I should ever drag in this child's poor dead father, who rests in heaven now, God bless him! But I wish he could have seen her to-day! He was fond of her.

Raimunda. That will do, Juliana! That will do.

Juliana. Don't talk like that to me, Raimunda. It's like a blow in the face, like beating a faithful hound. That's what I have been to you and your daughter and your house—a faithful hound, that has eaten your bread, God willing, in season and out—yes, and kept her self-respect while she was about it, and you know it. [*Goes out.*]

Raimunda. Juliana!—She is right, though. She has always been like a faithful hound—faithful and loyal to us and our house. [*She begins to sweep.*]

Acacia. Mother——

Raimunda. Did you speak?

Acacia. Will you let me have the key to this chest of drawers? I want to show Milagros some of my things.

Raimunda. Yes, here it is; take the bunch. Sit down and rest while I go and keep an eye on the supper. [*She takes the broom and goes out.*]

[*ACACIA and MILAGROS seat themselves on the floor before the chest of drawers and open the lower drawer or compartment.*]

Acacia. These earrings were a present from—well, from Esteban, since my mother isn't here. She always wants me to call him father.

Milagros. Don't you know that he loves you?

Acacia. Yes, but you can have only one father and mother. He brought me these handkerchiefs, too, from Toledo. The nuns embroidered the initials. See all these postcards—aren't they pretty?

Milagros. What lovely ladies!

Acacia. Yes, they're actresses from Madrid, or from Paris in France. Look at these boys—He brought me this box, too; it had candy in it.

Milagros. I don't see how you can say then. . . .

Acacia. I don't say anything. I know he loves me, but I'd rather have been left alone with my mother.

Milagros. You don't mean to tell me that your mother loves you any less on his account?

Acacia. I don't know. She's wrapped up in him. How do I know, if she had to choose between me and that man. . . .

Milagros. I think it's wicked to talk like that. Suppose your mother hadn't married again, what would she do now when you get married? She would have no one to live with.

Acacia. You don't suppose that I would ever have gotten married, do you, if I had been living alone with my mother?

Milagros. Of course you would! What difference would it make?

Acacia. Could I be as happy anywhere else as living here alone with my mother?

Milagros. Don't be foolish. Everybody knows what a nice stepfather you have. If he hadn't been good there would have been talk, and I would have heard it. So would you and your mother.

Acacia. I don't say that he isn't good. But all the same I wouldn't have married if my mother hadn't married again.

Milagros. Do you know what I think?

Acacia. What?

Milagros. People are right when they say that you don't love Faustino. The one that you love is Norbert.

Acacia. That's a lie! How could I love him?—after the way that he treated me.

Milagros. Everybody says that you were the one who turned him off.

Acacia. I did, did I? Yes, I suppose it was my fault! Anyway, we won't talk about it.

What do they know? I love Faustino better than I ever did Norbert.

Milagros. I hope you do. Otherwise you oughtn't to marry him. Did you hear that Norbert left the village this morning? He didn't want to be around.

Acacia. What does he care? Why to-day, more than any other? It is nothing to him. Here is the last letter he wrote me—after everything was over. I never mean to see him again; I don't know what I am keeping it for. It would be more sensible to tear it up. [*She tears the letter into small pieces.*] There! That ends it.

Milagros. What is the matter with you? You are all excited.

Acacia. It's what he says. Now I am going to burn the pieces.

Milagros. Look out! The lamp will explode.

Acacia. [*Opening the window.*] To the road with you! I'll scatter the ashes. . . . The wind blows them away. . . . It is over now, and I am glad of it. Did you ever see such a dark night?

Milagros. [*Following her to the window.*] It is black as pitch—no moon, no stars. . . .

Acacia. What was that?

Milagros. Somebody slammed a door.

Acacia. It sounded to me like a shot.

Milagros. Nonsense! Who would be out shooting at this hour? Unless there is a fire somewhere. . . . No, I don't see any glow in the sky.

Acacia. I am frightened. Yes, I am—

Milagros. Don't be silly!

Acacia. [*Running suddenly to the door.*] Mother! Mother!

Raimunda. [*Down-stairs.*] What is it?

Acacia. Did you hear anything?

Raimunda. [*Down-stairs.*] Yes. I sent Juliana to find out. It's all right.

Acacia. Oh, mother!

Raimunda. Don't be afraid! I am coming up.

Acacia. It was a shot! I know it was a shot!

Milagros. Suppose it was? What of it?

Acacia. God help us! [*RAIMUNDA enters.*]

Raimunda. Did it frighten you? Nothing is the matter.

Acacia. Mother, you are frightened yourself.

Raimunda. Because you are. Naturally, I was frightened at first—your father hasn't

come back. But it is silly. Nothing could have happened. What was that? Do you hear? Some one is down-stairs. God help us!

Acacia. Mother! Mother!

Milagros. What do they say? What are they talking about?

Raimunda. Stay where you are. I am going down.

Acacia. Mother, don't you go!

Raimunda. I can't make out what they say. . . . I am too excited. . . . Oh, Esteban, my heart! May no harm have come to you! [*She rushes out.*]

Milagros. There is a crowd down-stairs. They are coming in. I can't make out what they say. . . .

Acacia. Something has happened! Something awful! I knew it all the time.

Milagros. So did I, only I didn't want to frighten you.

Acacia. What do you think?

Milagros. Don't ask me! Don't ask!

Raimunda. [*Down-stairs.*] Holy Virgin! God save us! Terrible, terrible! Oh, his poor mother when she hears that her poor boy is dead—murdered! I can't believe it! What a terrible thing for us all!

Acacia. What does she say? Did you hear?—Mother! Mother! Mother!

Raimunda. *Acacia!* Daughter! Don't you come down! Don't come down! I am coming up.

[*RAIMUNDA, FIDELA, ENGRACIA, and a number of other women enter.*]

Acacia. What's the matter? What has happened? Some one is dead, isn't he? Some one is dead?

Raimunda. My poor child! Faustino! Faustino!

Acacia. What?

Raimunda. Murdered! Shot dead as he left the village!

Acacia. Mother! *Ay!* But who did it? Who did it?

Raimunda. Nobody knows. It was too dark; they couldn't see. Every one thinks it was Norbert—so as to fill the cup of disgrace which we must drain in this house!

Engracia. It couldn't have been any one else.

Women. It was Norbert! It was Norbert!

Fidela. Here come the constables.

Engracia. Have they caught him?

Raimunda. And here is your father.

[*ESTEBAN enters.*] Esteban, my soul! Who did it? Do you know?

Esteban. How do I know? I saw what the rest did. Don't leave the house, do you hear? I don't want to have you running around the village.

Raimunda. But how is his father? Think of his poor mother when they carry her boy home to her dead—murdered! And he left her alive, happy, and well only this morning!

Engracia. Hanging is too good for the wretch that did it!

Fidela. They ought to have killed him on the spot! Such a thing never happened before in this village.

Raimunda. Esteban, don't let them take the body away. I must see him—and so must my daughter. He was to have been her husband.

Esteban. Keep cool! There is plenty of time. I don't want you to leave the house, do you hear? It's in the hands of the law now; the doctor and priest were too late. I must hurry back; we all have depositions to make. [*He retires.*]

Raimunda. Your father is right. What can we do?—except commend his soul to God, who was his Maker. I can't get his poor mother out of my head! Don't take it so hard, Acacia. It frightens me to see you so still. It is worse than if you cried your heart out. Who would ever have believed this morning that such a thing could be? But it is! A curse has fallen upon us!

Engracia. The shot went straight through his heart.

Fidela. He fell off his horse, like a log.

Raimunda. What a shame, what a disgrace to the village! I blush to think that the murderer was born in this place, that he was one of us, and walked about here with all that evil in his heart! He is one of our own family, to make it worse!

Gaspara. But we aren't sure of that.

Raimunda. Who else could it be? Everybody says so.

Engracia. Everybody says it was Norbert.

Fidela. It couldn't have been any one but Norbert!

Raimunda. Light the candles, Milagros, before the image of the Virgin. Let us tell her a rosary, since we can do no more than pray for the dead.

Gaspara. God rest his soul!

Engracia. He died without confession.

Fidela. From Purgatory, good Lord, deliver us.

All. God rest his soul!

Raimunda. [*To MILAGROS.*] You begin the rosary; I cannot pray. I am thinking of his mother's broken heart!

[*The women begin to tell the rosary.*]

ACT TWO

Entrance hall of a farmhouse. There is a large door at the rear, on either side of which is a window, having an iron grating. A door on the left, and another on the right.

ESTEBAN is seated at a small table, taking lunch. RAIMUNDA waits upon him, seated also. JULIANA comes and goes, assisting with the service. ACACIA sits in a low chair near one of the windows, sewing. A basket of clothes stands beside her.

Raimunda. Don't you like it?

Esteban. Of course I do.

Raimunda. You haven't eaten anything. Do you want us to cook something else?

Esteban. Don't bother me, my dear. I have had plenty.

Raimunda. You don't expect me to believe that. [*Calling.*] Juliana! Bring the salad!—Something is the matter with you.

Esteban. Don't be silly.

Raimunda. Don't you suppose that I know you by this time? You ought never to have gone to the village. You've heard talk. We came out here to the grove to get rid of it all, to be away from the excitement, and it was a good thing, too, that we did. Now you go back to the village and don't say one word to me about it. What did you want to do that for?

Esteban. I wanted to see Norbert and his father.

Raimunda. Yes, but you could have sent for them and have had them come out here. You ought to have spared yourself; then you wouldn't have heard all this talk. I know how they are talking in the village.

Juliana. Yes, and that is all the good it does us to stay out here and shut ourselves up from everybody, because everybody that goes anywhere in the neighborhood passes through this grove, and then they stop, and smell around, and meddle in what is none of their business.

Esteban. Yes, and you meddle with every one of them.

Juliana. No, señor; don't you make any mistake. I meddle with nobody. Didn't I scold Bernabea only yesterday for talking more than she had any right to with some men from Encinar who were coming down the road? If any one asks questions send them to me, because I've learned what to do from my mother, who had good reason to know: When questioned much, answer little, and be sure you make it just the opposite.

Raimunda. Hold your tongue! And get out. [*JULIANA retires.*] What do they say in the village?

Esteban. Nothing. Tío Eusebio and his boys swear they are going to kill Norbert. They refuse to accept the decision of the court; he got off too easily. They are coming over some day, and then there will be trouble. You hear both sides in the village. Some think that Tío Eusebio is right, that it must have been Norbert; others think it wasn't Norbert. They say that the court let him go because he was innocent, and he proved it.

Raimunda. That is what I think. No one could contradict his deposition; not even Faustino's father could find any flaws in it, nor the hands. You couldn't yourself, and you were with them.

Esteban. Tío Eusebio and I had stopped to light our cigars. We were laughing like two fools because I had my lighter, and it wouldn't light; so Tío Eusebio got out his tinder and flint and said to me, laughing: "Here, get a light, and don't waste your time with that new-fangled machine. All it is good for is to help fools waste their money. I still make out with this." That was what blinded us. We were fooling over the light when the shot was fired. We started up and could see nothing. Then, when we saw that he had dropped dead, we stood stock-still, as dead as he was. They could have finished us, too, while they were about it, and we would never have known it.

[*ACACIA gets up suddenly and starts to go out.*]

Raimunda. Where are you going, my dear? Don't be nervous.

Acacia. You never talk about anything else. I don't see how you can stand it. Hasn't he told us how it happened over and over again? Do we have to hear the same thing all the time?

Esteban. She is right. If I had my way, I'd never mention it again; it's your mother.

Acacia. I even dream about it at night. I never used to be nervous when I was alone or in the dark, but now I am frightened to death, even in broad daylight.

Raimunda. You are not the only one, either. I get no rest, day nor night. I never used to be afraid. I thought nothing of passing the cemetery after dark, not even on All Soul's Eve, but now the least thing makes me jump, no matter what—noise, silence. To tell the truth, as long as we thought it was Norbert, although he was one of the family, and it would have been a shame and a disgrace to us all, at the same time it couldn't be helped; there was nothing to do but resign oneself—and I had resigned myself. After all, it had an explanation. But now, if it wasn't Norbert, if nobody knows who it was, and nobody can explain why it was that that poor boy was shot—I can't be easy in my mind. If it wasn't Norbert, who could have wished him any harm? Maybe it was revenge, some enemy of his father's, or of yours—how do we know but that the shot was intended for you, and since it was night and pitch-dark, they made a mistake, and what they didn't do then they will another time, and . . . I can't stand this suspense! I get no rest! Every time that you go out of the house and show yourself on the road, it seems to me that I will go crazy. To-day, when you were late, I was just starting for the village myself.

Acacia. She was out on the road already.

Raimunda. Yes, only I saw you and Rubio from the top of the hill, so I turned and ran back before you passed the mill, so you wouldn't be angry. I know it is foolish, but now I want to be with you all the time, wherever you go—I can't bear to be separated from you for one moment. Otherwise I can't be happy. This isn't living.

Esteban. I don't believe anybody wishes me any harm. I never wronged any man. I go wherever I please, without so much as giving it a thought, day or night.

Raimunda. I used to feel the same; there is nobody who could wish us harm. We have helped so many. But all that you need is one enemy, one envious, evil mind. How do we know but that we have some enemy without our suspecting it? A second shot might come from the same quarter as the first. Norbert

is free because they couldn't prove that he was guilty; and I am glad of it. Why shouldn't I be glad when he is my own sister's son—my favorite sister's? I could never have believed that Norbert could have done such a thing as murder a man in the dark! But is this to be the end of it? What is the law doing now? Why don't they investigate, why doesn't some one speak? Somebody must know, somebody must have seen whoever it was that was there that day, hovering along the road. When everything is all right, everybody knows who is passing, and what is going on—who comes and who goes—you hear it all without asking; but when you want to know, then nobody knows, nobody has seen anything.

Esteban. I can't see why that is so strange. When a man is going about his business, he has nothing to conceal; but when his intentions are evil, naturally the first thing he does is to hide himself.

Raimunda. Who do you think that it was?

Esteban. I? To tell the truth, I thought it was Norbert, the same as you. If it wasn't Norbert, I don't know who it was.

Raimunda. I suppose you won't like it, but I'll tell you what I have made up my mind to do.

Esteban. What?

Raimunda. Talk to Norbert. Bernabé has gone to find him. I expect him any minute.

Acacia. Norbert? What do you want to talk to him for?

Esteban. That is what I say. What does he know about it?

Raimunda. How can I tell? But I know he won't lie to me. By the memory of his mother, I will make him tell me the truth. If he did it, he knows I will never tell. I can't stand this any longer. I shake all over.

Esteban. Do you suppose that Norbert is going to tell you if he was the one who did it?

Raimunda. After I talk to him I shall know.

Esteban. Well, have your own way. It will only make more talk and hard feeling, especially since Tío Eusebio is coming over to-day. If they meet. . . .

Raimunda. They won't meet on the road, because they come from different directions. After they are here the house is big enough. We can take care of them both.

[JULIANA enters.]

Juliana. Master. . . .

Esteban. Why are you always bothering me?

Juliana. Tío Eusebio is coming down the road. Maybe you don't want to see him; I thought you might like to know. . . .

Esteban. Why shouldn't I want to see him? Didn't I tell you he was coming?—Now bring in the other one!

Raimunda. Yes, he can't come too soon to please me.

Esteban. Who told you that I didn't want to see Tío Eusebio?

Juliana. Oh, don't blame it on me! It wasn't my fault. Rubio says you don't want to see him because he is mad at you. You didn't side with him in court, and that's the reason that Norbert went free.

Esteban. I'll teach Rubio it's none of his business whom I side with.

Juliana. Yes, and there are other things you might teach him while you are about it. Have I nothing to do but wait on that man? God help me, he has had more to drink to-day than is good for him. And that isn't talk, either.

Raimunda. This is the last straw! Where is he?

Esteban. No, leave him to me.

Raimunda. Everything goes wrong in this house. Everybody takes advantage of you as soon as anything is the matter. You don't need to turn your back—it's instinct. They know when you can't take care of yourself.

Juliana. I'll not take that from you, Raimunda, if you mean me.

Raimunda. You know who I mean. Take it any way you like.

Juliana. Señor, señor! What curse has fallen on this house? We are all poisoned, snared, our feet are caught in some evil vine; we are changed. One takes it out on the other, and everybody is against me. God help me, I say, and give me the strength to endure it!

Raimunda. Yes, and give me the strength to endure you.

Juliana. Yes, me! It is all my fault.

Raimunda. Look at me, will you? Do I have to tell you to your face to get out? That's all I want from you.

Juliana. Yes, you want me to shut up like a tomb. Well, I'll shut up, God help me! Señor! Let me out! Don't talk to me! [Goes out.]

Esteban. Here comes Tío Eusebio.

Acacia. I am going. He breaks down and cries whenever he sees me. He doesn't know what he is doing, but it's always the wrong thing. Does he think he is the only one who has lost anything?

Raimunda. I am sure I have cried as much as his mother has. Tío Eusebio is not the same man; he forgets. But never mind. You are right not to see him.

Acacia. I have finished the shirts, mother. I'll iron them as soon as I have time.

Esteban. Were you sewing for me?

Acacia. You can see for yourself.

Raimunda. I don't know how we'd get on if she didn't sew. I am not good for anything. I don't know whether I am alive or dead, God help me! But she can work. She gets through with it somehow. [*She caresses ACACIA affectionately as she passes out.*] God bless you, Acacia, my child! [*ACACIA goes out.*] It is a terrible responsibility to be a mother. For a long time I was afraid that she was going to get married and leave me. Now, what wouldn't I give to see her married?

[*Tío EUSEBIO enters.*]

Eusebio. Hello! Where is everybody?

Esteban. Come in, Tío Eusebio.

Eusebio. Good morning to both.

Raimunda. Good morning, Tío Eusebio.

Esteban. Where are your horses? I'll have them put up.

Eusebio. My man will tend to that.

Esteban. Sit down. Come, a glass of that wine he likes so much, Raimunda.

Eusebio. No, no, thank you. I am not feeling well. Wine doesn't agree with me.

Esteban. This wine will do you good. It's a tonic.

Raimunda. Suit yourself. How are you, Tío Eusebio? How is Julia?

Eusebio. Julia? What do you expect? I am going to lose her just as I did the boy; I can see it.

Raimunda. God forbid! Hasn't she four sons yet to live for?

Eusebio. Yes, the more worry! That is what is killing her—worry. Nobody knows what will happen next. Our hearts are broken. We were sure that we would get justice; but now we are bitter. Everybody said it would be like this, but we didn't believe it. The murderer is alive—you pass him on the street; he goes home to his house, shuts the door, and laughs at us. It only proves what I knew all the time. There is no such thing in this

world as justice, unless a man takes it with his own hands, which is what they will drive us to do now. That is why I wanted to see you yesterday. If my boys come into the village, send them home. Don't let them stay around. Arrest them—anything rather than another tragedy in our house; although I don't want to see his murderer go free—the murderer of my boy—unless God avenges him, as he must, by God!—or else there is no justice in heaven.

Raimunda. Don't turn against God, Tío Eusebio. Though the hand of justice never fall upon him after the foul murder he has done, yet there is not one of us that would be in his place. He is alone with his conscience. I would not have what he has on his soul upon mine, for all the blessings of this world. We have lived good lives, we have done evil to no man, yet all our days are purgatory and torment. He must have hell in his heart after what he has done—of that we can be sure—as sure as of the day of our death.

Eusebio. That is cold comfort to me. How does it help me prevent my boys from taking the law into their own hands? Justice has not been done—and it should have been done. Now they are the ones who will go to jail for it! They will make good their threats too. You ought to hear them. Even the little fellow, who is only twelve, doubles up his fists like a man, and swears that whoever killed his brother will have to reckon with him, come what may. I sit there and cry like a child. I needn't tell you how his mother feels. And all the while I have it in my heart to say: Go, my sons! Stone him until he is dead! Cut him to pieces like a hound! Drag his carcass home to me through the mire—what offal there is left of it! Instead I swallow it all and look grave, and tell them that it is wrong even to think of such a thing—it would kill their mother, it would ruin all of us!

Raimunda. You are unreasonable, Tío Eusebio. Norbert is innocent; the law says so. No one could bring the least proof against him; he proved where he was, and what he was doing all that day, one hour after the other. He and his men were up at Los Berrocales. Don Faustino, the doctor, saw him there and talked with him at the very hour it took place, and he is from Eñicinar. You know yourself no man can be in two places at the same time. You might think that his

own people had been told to say what they did, although it isn't an easy thing for so many to agree on a lie; but Don Faustino is a friend of yours; he is in your debt. And others who would naturally have been on your side said the same. Only one shepherd from Los Berrocales would testify that he had seen a man at that hour, and that was a great way off; but he had no idea who it was. From his clothes and the way that he carried himself he was sure that it could not have been Norbert.

Eusebio. If it wasn't, I say nothing. Does it make it any better for us that he hired some one else to do it? There can't be any doubt; there is no other explanation. I have no enemies who would do such a thing. I never harmed any man; I help every one, whether they are our own people or not. I make it easy. If I were to sue for one-half the damage that is done me every day, it would take all of my time. I will die a poor man. They killed Faustino because he was going to marry Acacia. That is all there is to it. Nobody could have had any such reason but Norbert. If everybody had told what they knew, the trial would have ended right there. But the ones who knew most said the least; they said nothing.

Raimunda. Do you mean us?

Eusebio. I don't say who I mean.

Raimunda. It is plain enough; you don't have to mention names nor point your finger. Do you mean to say that we keep quiet because Norbert is one of our family?

Eusebio. Do you mean to say that Acacia doesn't know more about this thing than she is willing to admit?

Raimunda. No, sir, she knows no more about it than you do. You have made up your mind that it was Norbert because you want to make yourself believe that nobody else has anything against you. We are none of us saints, Tío Eusebio. You may have done a great deal of good in your time, but you must also have done some evil; you think that nobody remembers, but maybe the ones who have suffered don't think the same. If Norbert had been in love with my daughter to that extent, he would have shown it before now. Your son didn't take her away from him, remember that. Faustino never said one word until after she was done with Norbert, and she turned him off because she knew he was going with

another girl. He never so much as took the trouble to excuse himself, so that when you come down to it, he was the one who left her. That is no reason why any one should commit murder. You can see it yourself.

Eusebio. Then why did everybody say that it couldn't have been any one else? You said so yourself; everybody said so.

Raimunda. Yes, because at first he was the only one we could think of. But when you look at it calmly, it is foolish to say that he is the only one who could have done it. You insinuate that we have something to conceal. Once for all, let me tell you, we are more anxious than you are to have the truth known, to have this thing out and be done with it. You have lost a son, but I have a daughter who is alive, and she has nothing to gain, either, by this mystery.

Eusebio. No, she hasn't. Much less when she keeps her mouth shut. And you haven't anything to gain. You don't know what Norbert and his father say about this house so as to divert suspicion from themselves? If I believed what they said. . . .

Raimunda. About us? What do they say? [To ESTEBAN.] You have been in the village. What do they say?

Esteban. Nobody cares what they say.

Eusebio. No, I don't believe one word that comes from them. I am only telling you how they repay the kindness you do them by taking their part.

Raimunda. So you are on that tack again? Tío Eusebio, I have to stop and force myself to think what it must mean to lose a child, or I would lose control of myself. I am a mother, God knows, yet you come here and insult my daughter. You insult all of us.

Esteban. Wife! Enough of this. What is the use? Tío Eusebio. . . .

Eusebio. I insult nobody. I only repeat what other people say. You suppress the truth because he is one of the family. The whole village is the same. What you are afraid of is the disgrace. People here may think that it was not Norbert, but in Encinar, let me tell you, they think that it was. If justice isn't done—and done quick—blood will be spilled between these villages, and nobody can stop it, either. You know what young blood is.

Raimunda. Yes, and you are the one who stirs it up. You respect neither God nor man

Why, didn't you just admit that Norbert couldn't have done it unless he had hired some one to commit the murder? Nonsense! It isn't so easy to hire a man to commit murder. What had a boy like Norbert to give, anyway?—Unless you want us to believe that his father had a hand in it.

Eusebio. Bah! Rogues come cheap. How about the Valderrobles? They live here. Didn't they kill two goatherds for three and a half duros?

Raimunda. How long was it before they were found out? They fought over the half duro. When you hire a man to do a deed like that, you put yourself in his power; you become his slave for the rest of your life. There may be people who can afford to do such things, but they must be rich, they must have power. Not a boy like Norbert!

Eusebio. Every family has a faithful servant who will do what he is told.

Raimunda. No doubt yours has. No doubt you have had occasion to use him too; you know so much about it.

Eusebio. Take care what you say!

Raimunda. Take care yourself!

Esteban. Raimunda! Enough of this. What is the use of all this talk?

Eusebio. Well, you hear what she says. How about you?

Esteban. If we dwell on this forever, we shall all of us go mad.

Eusebio. Yes. You heard what I said.

Raimunda. If you mean by that you don't intend to let this matter drop until you have found the murderer of your boy, it is only right and proper, and I respect you for it. But that is no reason why you should come here and insult us. Once for all, you may want justice, but I want it more than you do. I pray to God for it every day, I pray him on my knees not to let the murderer go free—and I should pray to him just the same if I had a boy—if it had been my own boy that did it! [*RUBIO appears in the doorway.*]

Rubio. How about me, master?

Esteban. Well, Rubio?

Rubio. Don't look at me like that; I'm not drunk. We started out before lunch, that was all. I had an invitation and took a drop; it went against me. I'm sorry you feel that way about it.

Raimunda. What is the matter with him? Juliana was right.

Rubio. Tell Juliana to mind her business, will you? I just wanted to tell the master.

Esteban. Rubio! You can tell me later whatever you like. Tío Eusebio is here. Don't you see? We are busy.

Rubio. Tío Eusebio? So he is. What does he want?

Raimunda. Is it any of your business what he wants? Get out! Go along and sleep it off. You don't know what you are talking about.

Rubio. I know, señora. Don't say that to me.

Esteban. Rubio!

Rubio. Juliana's a fool; I don't drink. It was my money, anyhow. I'm no thief. What I have is my own; and my wife is my own, too. She owes nobody anything, eh, master?

Esteban. Rubio! Go along! Get to bed, and don't show yourself again until you have had a good sleep. What is the matter with you? What will Tío Eusebio think?

Rubio. I don't know. I don't take anything, understand—from anybody. [*Goes out.*]

Raimunda. What was it that you were just saying about servants, Tío Eusebio? This man has us with our hearts in our throats, yet he is nothing to us. Suppose we had trusted him with some secret? What is the matter with Rubio, anyway? Is he going to get drunk every day? He was never like this before. You ought not to put up with it.

Esteban. Don't you see? He isn't used to it. That is the reason he is upset by a thimbleful. Somebody invited him into the tavern while I was tending to my business. I gave him a piece of my mind and sent him to bed, but he hasn't slept it off yet. He is drunk. That is all there is to it.

Eusebio. Perfectly natural. Is that all?

Esteban. Drop in again, Tío Eusebio.

Eusebio. Thanks. I am sorry this happened—after I took the trouble to come.

Raimunda. Nonsense! Nothing has happened. We have no hard feeling.

Eusebio. No, and I hope you won't have any. Remember what I've been through. My heart is broken—it's not scratched. It won't heal either until God claims another one of his own. How long do you expect to stay in the grove?

Esteban. Till Sunday. We have nothing to keep us. We only wanted to be out of the village. Now that Norbert is home, it is nothing but talk, talk, talk.

Eusebio. That's right—nothing but talk.

If you see my boys around, look out! I don't want them to get into any trouble, which afterward we might have cause to regret.

Esteban. Don't you worry. They won't get into any while I am around. Blame it on me if they do.

Eusebio. They're working down by the river now. They'll be all right unless somebody happens along and stirs them up. God be with you, I say. Adios! Where is Acacia?

Raimunda. I told her not to come down, so as to spare your feelings. It is hard on her, too; it brings back everything.

Eusebio. That's so. It must.

Esteban. I'll send for your horses.

Eusebio. No, I can call myself.—Francisco!—Here he comes. Take care of yourselves. God be with you!

[*They move toward the door.*]

Raimunda. God be with you, Tío Eusebio. Tell Julia not to worry. I think of her every day. I have prayed more for her than I have for the boy—God has forgiven him by this time. Surely he never did anything to deserve such a bad end! My heart bleeds for him.

[*ESTEBAN and Tío EUSEBIO have passed out while she is speaking.*

BERNABÉ enters.]

Bernabé. Señora!

Raimunda. Is Norbert here? Could you find him?

Bernabé. Yes, I brought him along so as to save time. He wanted to see you himself.

Raimunda. Didn't you meet Tío Eusebio?

Bernabé. No, we saw him coming up from the river when we were a long way off, so we turned and went in by the great corral. Norbert is hiding there until Tío Eusebio starts back to Encinar.

Raimunda. There he goes up the road now.

Bernabé. Yes—under the great cross.

Raimunda. Tell Norbert. No—wait! What do they say in the village?

Bernabé. No good, señora. The law is going to have its hands full before it gets to the bottom of this.

Raimunda. Does anybody think it was Norbert?

Bernabé. You would get your head broke if you said it was. When he came back yesterday, half the town was out to meet him. Everybody was sitting by the roadside. They took him up on their shoulders and carried him home. The women all cried, and the

men hugged him. I thought his father would die for joy.

Raimunda. He never did it. Poor Norbert!

Bernabé. They say the men are coming over from Encinar to kill him; everybody here carries a club and goes armed.

Raimunda. Mother of God! Did anything go wrong with the master while he was in the village this morning? What did you hear?

Bernabé. So they have been talking to you?

Raimunda. No. That is—yes; I know.

Bernabé. Rubio was in the tavern and began to say things, so I ran for the master, and he came and ordered him out. He was insolent to the master. He was drunk.

Raimunda. Do you remember what he said? I mean Rubio.

Bernabé. Oh! His tongue ran away with him. He was drunk. Do you know what I think? If I were you, I wouldn't go back to the village for two or three days.

Raimunda. No, certainly not. If I had my way we would never go back. I am filled with a loathing for it all so great that I want to rush out, and down that long road, and then on and up over those mountains to the other side, and after that I don't know where I would hide myself. I feel as if some one were running after me, after me, always after me, with more than death in his heart. But the master. . . . Where is the master?

Bernabé. Seeing to Rubio.

Raimunda. Tell Norbert to come in. I can't wait.

[*BERNABÉ goes out. NORBERT enters.*]

Norbert. Aunt Raimunda!

Raimunda. Norbert, my boy! Give me a hug.

Norbert. I am so glad you sent for me. I've been treated like a dog. It's a good thing that my mother is dead and in heaven. I am glad she never lived to see this day. Next to my father, there is nobody in the world I think so much of as I do of you.

Raimunda. I could never have believed that you did it—not though everybody said so.

Norbert. I know it; you were the first to take my part. Where is Acacia?

Raimunda. In her room. We have our fill of trouble in this house.

Norbert. Who says I killed Faustino? If I hadn't proved, as I did prove, where I was all that day, if I'd done as I meant at first and taken my gun and gone off to hunt alone

by myself, and then couldn't have proved where I was, because nobody had seen me, I would have spent the rest of my life in prison. They would have had me.

Raimunda. Are you crying?

Norbert. No, I am not crying; but I cried when I found myself in that prison. If anybody had ever told me that I would ever go to prison, I would never have believed it; I'd have laughed in his face. But that isn't the worst. Tío Eusebio and his boys have sworn to kill me. They will never believe that I am innocent; they know I murdered Faustino. They are as sure of it as I am that my mother lies under the ground!

Raimunda. Because nobody knows who did it. Nobody can find out anything. Don't you see? They will never rest at that. Do you suspect any one?

Norbert. I more than suspect.

Raimunda. Then why didn't you say so? You were in court. You had the opportunity.

Norbert. If I hadn't cleared myself I would have told. But what was the use? I am a dead man now if I speak. They will do the same thing to me.

Raimunda. Eh? Will they? What do you mean? Was it revenge? But who did it? Tell me what you think. I must know, because Tío Eusebio and Esteban have always had the same friends; they have always stood together, for better or for worse, whichever it was. Their enemies would naturally be the same. No, I can get no rest. This vengeance was intended for us just as much as it was for Tío Eusebio; it was to prevent a closer union of our families. Maybe they won't stop at that, either. Some day they will do the same to my husband!

Norbert. I wouldn't worry about Uncle Esteban.

Raimunda. Why, what do you mean? Do you think? . . .

Norbert. I don't think.

Raimunda. Then tell me what you know. Somehow I believe you are not the only one who knows it. You think what the rest think—it must be the same—what everybody knows.

Norbert. Well, they didn't get it out of me; that is one thing you can be sure of. Besides, how could they know? It's gossip, that's all—not worth that! Talk in the village! They will never get it out of me.

Raimunda. Norbert, by the soul of your sainted mother in heaven, tell me what it is!

Norbert. For God's sake, I can't talk! I was afraid to open my mouth in court. Now, if I say a word, I am a dead man. A dead man!

Raimunda. But who would kill you?

Norbert. Who killed Faustino?

Raimunda. But who did kill Faustino? Some one was paid to do it, is that it? Rubio said something in the wine-shop this morning.

Norbert. Who told you?

Raimunda. Esteban went in and dragged him out; it was the only way he could stop him.

Norbert. He didn't want to be compromised.

Raimunda. What is that? He didn't want to be compromised? Was Rubio saying that he. . . .

Norbert. That he was the real master of this house.

Raimunda. The master of this house? Because it was Rubio. . . .

Norbert. Rubio.

Raimunda. Who killed Faustino?

Norbert. Sí, señora.

Raimunda. Rubio! I knew it all the time. But does anybody else know? That is the question. Do they know it in the village?

Norbert. He gives himself away; he has money—bills, bank-notes—wherever he goes. He turned on them this morning while they were singing that song. That was why they had to call Uncle Esteban, and he kicked him out of the wine-shop.

Raimunda. That song? Oh, yes! That song—I remember. It goes. . . . How does it go?

Norbert.

"Who loves the maid that dwells by the Mill
Shall love in evil hour;

Because she loves with the love that she
loves,

Call her the Passion Flower."

Raimunda. We are the ones who dwell by the Mill; that is what they call us. It is here—our house. And the maid that dwells by the Mill must be Acacia, my daughter. This song that everybody sings. . . . They call her the Passion Flower? That is it, isn't it? But who loves her in an evil way? How could anybody love her? You loved her, Faustino loved her; but who else ever

loved her? Why do they call her the Passion Flower? Look me in the eye! Why did you give her up if you really loved her? Why? I want you to tell me; you have got to tell me. You cannot tell me anything worse than what I already know.

Norbert. Do you want them to kill me? To ruin all of us? I have never said one word—not even when they had me in prison would I say one word! I don't know how it got out—Rubio told, or my father. He is the only one who ever had it from me. He wanted to put the law on them, but I said no. They would have killed him; they would have killed me!

Raimunda. Stop! Don't you talk! I see it now. I see it all. The Passion Flower! *La Malquerida!* Come here to me! Tell me everything. Before they kill you, by God, they will have to kill me! It cannot go on like this. Somebody must pay for it. Tío Eusebio and his boys will never rest till they have justice. If they can't get it in any other way, they will take it out of you—revenge! You can't escape. Faustino was murdered so as to prevent him from marrying Acacia. You left her for the same reason—for fear that they would kill you. Was that it? Tell me the truth!

Norbert. They told me to leave her because she was promised to Faustino; she had been for a long time. They said they had an understanding with Tío Eusebio, and if I didn't make the best of it, then I could take the worst of it. But if I ever opened my mouth.

Raimunda. They would kill you? Was that it? But you. . .

Norbert. I believed it—I was afraid—I didn't know what to do. Then I began to run after another girl, who was nothing to me, so as to break off with Acacia. Afterward, when I found out that not a word of it was true, that neither Tío Eusebio nor Faustino had ever spoken to Uncle Esteban. . . . Then, when they killed Faustino I knew why they killed him. It was because he dared lay eyes on Acacia. There was nothing they could tell him. They couldn't scare him off. Tío Eusebio wasn't a man to stand by and see his son refused. They couldn't refuse, so they agreed to it, and went through with it until the end came, and they killed him. They killed him because I was here to take the blame. Who else could have done it? Of course it was I! I loved Acacia—I was

jealous. That was the plot. Praise God, some saint surely watched over me that day! But now the crime has come home to him. It lies like lead on his conscience. He betrays himself. . . .

Raimunda. Is it possible that such a thing could be? I must have been blind not to see. What veil hung over my eyes? Why, it is all as clear as day! How could I have been so blind?

Norbert. What are you doing?

Raimunda. I don't know—I don't know where I am—something so awful, so vast is passing through my mind that it seems as if it were nothing. I can only remember one thing of all that you have told me—that song—*La Malquerida!* The Passion Flower! I want you to teach me the music. We can sing it together, and dance—dance and drop dead!—Acacia! Acacia! Acacia!

Norbert. No, don't you call her! Don't take it like this! It wasn't her fault!

[ACACIA enters.]

Acacia. Did you call, mother?—Norbert!

Raimunda. Come here! Look at me—straight in the eye.

Acacia. What is the matter with you, mother?

Raimunda. No, it was not your fault.

Acacia. But what have they been doing? What did you tell her?

Raimunda. What every one else knows already—*La Malquerida!* The Passion Flower! Your honor is a scorn and a byword. It is bandied about in men's mouths!

Acacia. My honor? Never! No one can say that.

Raimunda. Don't you deny it! Tell me what you know. Why was it that you never called him father? Why was it?

Acacia. Because a child has only one father, you know that. This man could never be my father. I hated, I despised him from the day that he entered this house, and brought hell along after him!

Raimunda. Well, you are going to call him now, and you are going to call him what I tell you; you are going to call him father. Do you hear? Your father! I tell you to call your father.

Acacia. Do you want me to go to the cemetery and call him? If that isn't what you want, I have no father. This man—this man is your husband; you love him, but all that he is to me is this man! This man!

That is all he can ever be! Leave me alone if you know what is good for you—you think you are so smart. Let the law take its course. I don't care. If he has sinned, he can pay for it.

Raimunda. Do you mean for Faustino's murder? Yes—go on! Go on! What else? Out with it!

Acacia. No, mother, no! For if I had consented, Faustino would never have been murdered! Do you think I don't know how to guard my honor?

Raimunda. Then what have you been so silent about? Why didn't you come to me?

Acacia. Would you have taken my word against this man, when you were mad for him? And you must have been mad not to see! He would eat me up with his eyes while you sat there; he followed me around the house like a cat. What more do you want? I hated him so, I had such a horror of him that I prayed to God that he would make himself even more of a beast than he was, so that it would open your eyes, if anything could have opened your eyes, and let you see what manner of man he was who had robbed me of your love, for you have loved him, you have loved him so much—more than you ever loved my father!

Raimunda. No! That isn't true!

Acacia. I wanted you to hate him as I hate him, as my father in heaven hates him! I have heard his voice from the skies.

Raimunda. Silence! For shame! Come here to your mother. You are all that I have left in the world. And thank God that I can still protect you! [BERNABÉ enters.]

Bernabé. Señora! Señora!

Raimunda. What brings you running in such a hurry? No good, we may be sure.

Bernabé. Don't let Norbert leave the house! Don't let him out of your sight!

Raimunda. How?

Bernabé. Tío Eusebio's boys are waiting outside with their men to kill him.

Norbert. What did I tell you? You wouldn't believe it. They are here—they want to kill me! And they will kill me. Yes, they will!

Raimunda. Not unless they kill us all first! Somebody has sent for them.

Bernabé. Yes, Rubio. I saw him running along the river bank where Tío Eusebio's boys were at work.

Norbert. Didn't I tell you? They want to kill me, so as to save themselves. Then nothing

will ever come out. Tío Eusebio's boys will think they have the man who murdered their brother. They will kill me, Aunt Raimunda! Yes, they will! They are too many for one; I can't defend myself. I haven't even a knife. I don't dare to carry a gun—I might kill some one. I'd rather die than be locked up in that cell again. Save me, Aunt Raimunda! I don't want to die. It wasn't my fault! They hunt me like a wolf.

Raimunda. Don't be afraid. If they kill you, it will be over my dead body. Go in there with Bernabé and take that gun, do you hear? They won't dare to come in. If they do, shoot to kill! When I call, shoot—no matter who it may be! Do you understand? No matter who it may be! Don't shut the door. [To ACACIA.] You stand here by me. Esteban! Esteban! Esteban!

Acacia. What are you going to do?

[ESTEBAN enters.]

Esteban. Did you call?

Raimunda. Yes, I want to speak to you. Norbert is here in our house. Tío Eusebio's boys are waiting outside. You sent for them to kill him—because you are not man enough to do it yourself.

Esteban. [Making a movement to draw a weapon.] Raimunda!

Acacia. Mother!

Raimunda. No, don't you do it! Call Rubio and let him make an end of us all! He will have to make an end of us all to cover your guilt. Murderer! Assassin!

Esteban. You are crazy!

Raimunda. I was crazy! I was crazy the day that you first entered this house—my house—like a thief, to rob me of all I held dear!

Esteban. What are you talking about?

Raimunda. I am not talking; other people are talking. Soon the law will speak. If you don't want that, do as I tell you, or I will cry out—I will rouse the house. You brought them here—take them away again, you cowards that lie in wait for innocent men, to stab them in the back! Norbert leaves this house, but he leaves with me. If they kill him, they kill me. I am here to protect him, and I will protect my daughter—I, alone, against you, against all the assassins you can hire! Go! Here come my people. . . . Don't you touch me! Hide yourself in the uttermost recesses of those mountains, in caves where the wild beasts dwell. Now I know! You

have nothing to hope for from me. Oh, I was alone with my child!—and you came. You knew that she was my child; there she stands—*La Malquerida!* The Passion Flower! Well! I am still here to guard her from you, to tell you that her father still lives in heaven—and to shoot you through the heart if you make one step to lay your hand on her!

ACT THREE

The scene is the same as in the Second Act. RAIMUNDA stands at the door, peering anxiously out over the countryside. After a moment JULIANA enters.

Juliana. Raimunda!

Raimunda. What do you want? Is he worse?

Juliana. No, don't be nervous.

Raimunda. How is he? Why did you leave him?

Juliana. He's asleep. Acacia is with him; she can hear if he calls. You are the one I am worried about. Thank God, he's not dead. Do you expect to go all day without eating?

Raimunda. Let me alone; don't bother me.

Juliana. What are you doing out here? Come on in and sit with us.

Raimunda. I was looking for Bernabé.

Juliana. He can't be back so soon if he brings the men to take Norbert away. If the constables come with him. . . .

Raimunda. Constables? Constables in this house? Ah, Juliana, surely a curse has fallen upon us all!

Juliana. Come on in, and don't be looking out of the door all the time. It's not Bernabé that you are looking for; it's the other one—it's your husband. When all is said and done, he is your husband.

Raimunda. Yes, the habits of a lifetime cannot be changed in one day. Although I know what I know, and that it must always be so, although if I saw him coming it would be to curse him, although I must loathe him for the rest of my life, yet here I stand looking out of the door and scanning every rock and cranny upon those mountains only for a sight of him! It seems to me as if I were waiting for him as I used to do, to see him come happy and smiling, and then turn and walk into the house with him arm in arm like two lovers, and sit down here at the table to eat, and go over everything that we had done

during the day. Sometimes we would laugh, sometimes we would argue, but always it was so dear, as if we had been fonder of each other than any one else who had ever lived in the world. Now it is all over; nothing remains. The peace of God has fled forever from this house!

Juliana. You cannot believe what you see with your eyes. If you hadn't told me yourself, if I didn't know how you felt, how you were, I would never have believed it. Faustino is dead, God help him; we can leave it. There might be more of the sort, too, for all I care; but this devil that has gotten into him with Acacia, it doesn't seem possible, I can't believe it—although I must believe it. There is no other explanation of the mystery.

Raimunda. Did you ever notice anything?

Juliana. Nothing. When he first came to the house, it was to make love to you, and I needn't tell you how I felt. I was fond of your first husband; there never was a better nor juster man in the world, so I looked on him with disfavor. God have mercy on me, but if I had seen anything, what reason would I have had for keeping quiet? Of course, when you come to think, he gave her presents—and there were a good many of them, too—but we never thought anything of that. She was so haughty with him. They never had one good talk together from the day you were married. She was only a runt then anyway. She insulted him out of pure spite. Nobody could do anything with her. If you struck her, it made no difference. I'll say this while I am about it: if she had been nice to him when she was little, he might have looked on her as his own daughter. Then we would never have been where we are now.

Raimunda. Are you trying to excuse him?

Juliana. Excuse him? There can be no excuse for such a thing. It was enough that she was your daughter. What I say is that the girl was like a stranger to him from the beginning, although she was your own child. If she had treated him like a father, as she ought—it would have been different; he isn't a bad man. A bad man is bad through and through. When you were first married, I've seen him sit by himself and cry at the way the girl ran from him, as if he had had the plague.

Raimunda. You are right. The only trouble we ever had was with the child.

Juliana. After she was grown there wasn't

a girl in the village that was her equal for looks. Nobody knows that better than you do. But she shrank from him as if he had been the devil. There she was all the time—right before his eyes! No wonder if he had an evil thought; none of us are above them.

Raimunda. I don't say he might not have had an evil thought, although he ought never to have had such a thought. But you put an evil thought out of your mind unless you are evil. He must have had more than an evil thought to do what he did, to murder a man in cold blood to prevent my daughter from marrying and going away—away from him; his mind must have been evil, like the criminal's, waiting to break out, with all the evil of the world in his heart. I am more anxious than anybody to believe that it is not so bad, but the more I think, the more I see that there can be no excuse for it. When I remember what has been hanging over my daughter all these years, that any moment—because a man who will do murder will do anything. If he had ever laid hands on her I would have killed them both, as sure as my name is Raimunda—him, because he had been guilty of such a crime, and her because she did not let him kill her before she would consent to it. [BERNABÉ enters.]

Juliana. Here comes Bernabé.

Raimunda. Are you alone?

Bernabé. Yes, they are deciding in the village what is best to be done. I was afraid to stay any longer.

Raimunda. You were right. This is not life. What do they say now?

Bernabé. Do you want to go mad? Forget it. Pay no attention to what they say.

Raimunda. Are they coming to take Norbert away?

Bernabé. His father will tend to that. The doctor won't let them put him in the cart for fear it will make him worse. He'll have to be carried on a stretcher. The judge and the prosecutor are coming to take his story, so they don't want a relapse. He was unconscious yesterday and couldn't testify. Everybody has his own idea; no two agree. Not a soul went to the fields to-day. The men stand around the streets in groups; the women talk in the houses and run to and fro. Nobody stops to eat. Not a meal has been served to-day, dinner or supper either, on the hour.

Raimunda. Didn't you tell them that Norbert's wounds aren't serious?

Bernabé. What difference does that make? Now they can't do anything. Yesterday, when they thought Tío Eusebio's boys had fallen on him with the master, and he was going to die, the thing was simple; but to-day they hear he is better. How do they know but that he will soon be well again? Even Norbert's best friends say that it's a great pity that the wound wasn't serious. If he was wounded at all, it might better have been serious. Then Tío Eusebio's boys could have been made to pay for it, and they would have had their revenge, but now, if he gets well, the law will get into it, and then nobody will be satisfied.

Juliana. They are so fond of Norbert, are they, that they wish he was dead? The idiots!

Bernabé. That is the way they are. I told them they could thank you for it, because you were the one who called the master, and the master threw himself between them and knocked up their guns, so they couldn't kill him.

Raimunda. Did you tell them that?

Bernabé. Every mother's son that asked me. I said the first because it was true, and I said the rest—because you don't know what they are saying in the village, nor how they feel about what is going on in this house.

Raimunda. No! I don't want to hear! Where is the master? Have you seen him? Do you know where he is?

Bernabé. He and Rubio were up at Los Berrocales this morning with the goatherds from Encinar. They spent the night in a hut on the uplands. I don't like this going away. It's not right, if I know what is good for him. It looks as if he was afraid. This is no time to have people think what isn't so. Norbert's father talks too much. This morning he tried to persuade Tío Eusebio that his sons had no cause to shoot his boy.

Raimunda. Is Tío Eusebio in the village?

Bernabé. He came with his boys. They arrested them this morning, tied them together by the elbows, and brought them over from Encinar. Their father followed on foot and brought the little fellow with him, holding his hand all the way. They cried with every step that they took. There wasn't a man in the village but cried, too, when he saw them, even the strongest, no matter if he had never cried before.

Raimunda. And his mother is alone at

home, and here I am! What do you men know? [ACACIA enters.]

Acacia. Mother——

Raimunda. Well? What is it?

Acacia. Norbert wants you. He is awake now. He wants some water. He is thirsty; I was afraid to give him any for fear it wasn't right.

Raimunda. The doctor says he can have all the orange-juice he can drink. Here's the jar. Does he suffer much?

Acacia. No, not now.

Raimunda. [To BERNABÉ.] Did you get the things for the doctor?

Bernabé. Yes, they're in the saddle-bags. I'll bring them in. [Goes out.]

Acacia. He is calling, mother. Do you hear?

Raimunda. Coming, Norbert, my boy. [Goes out.]

Acacia. Has that man come back?

Juliana. No. He took his gun and rushed out like one mad as soon as it was over. Rubio ran after him.

Acacia. Have they caught him?

Juliana. You'll hear soon enough when they do. They'll have to bring charges against him first.

Acacia. But doesn't everybody know? They heard what my mother said.

Juliana. No, nobody heard except me and Bernabé, and he won't tell what isn't good for him; he is honest and loyal to this house. They heard your mother shout, that was all. They thought it was because Norbert was here, and Tío Eusebio's boys were waiting outside to kill him. Nobody will say a word when the judge comes unless your mother tells us to open our mouths.

Acacia. Do you mean that my mother isn't going to let you tell the truth? Won't she tell what she knows?

Juliana. Is that what you want? So you want to disgrace this house, do you, and yourself? Then every man will think what he likes; some will believe that you are innocent, and some will never believe it. A woman's honor is not a thing to be bandied about in men's mouths, not when it is none of their business.

Acacia. My honor? I can take care of my honor. Let the others do the same. Now I shan't marry. I am glad it happened, because I shall never marry. I only agreed to it to get rid of him.

Juliana. Acacia, I don't want to hear you—not another word. Surely the devil must be in you!

Acacia. Yes, he is, and he has always been, since I first learned to hate that man!

Juliana. Yes, and who is to say that wasn't where the trouble began? You had no cause to hate him. Mind you, nobody blamed your mother more than I did when she married again; but all the same, I saw what a devil you were to this man when you were a little child, and how much it meant to him—which you were too young to know.

Acacia. How much did it mean to me to see my mother always hanging around his neck? Do you suppose I liked it, sitting here and seeing her love him? I was always in the way.

Juliana. You have no right to talk like that. You were always first with your mother, and you might have been with him.

Acacia. Might have been? Never! Because I was, and I am.

Juliana. But not like you mean, though you seem proud of it; in the way you should have been. He never would have loved you as he did if you had loved him as a daughter.

Acacia. How could I love him? Didn't he turn me even against my own mother?

Juliana. What do you mean? Turn you against your own mother?

Acacia. Yes. Do you suppose I can love her now as I ought, as I should have loved her if that man had never entered this house? I remember once when I was a little girl, I spent all one night with a knife under my pillow, and I lay awake all night. The only thought that I had in my mind that night was to kill him.

Juliana. Jesús, my child! What is that? Suppose you had? Suppose you had gotten up, and had dared, and had killed him?

Acacia. I don't know who I might have killed next.

Juliana. Holy Virgin! Jesús! Not another word. Don't you talk! You are beyond the pale of God's mercy. Do you know what I think? It was all your fault.

Acacia. All my fault?

Juliana. Yes, yours! It was your fault! And I'll go further: if you hated him as much as you say you do, then he would have been the only one you would have hated—yes, the only one! Jesús! It's a good thing that your mother doesn't know!

Acacia. Know what?

Juliana. That he wasn't the one you were jealous of. It was her! You were in love with him and you didn't know it.

Acacia. In love with him?

Juliana. Yes, hate turned to love. Nobody can hate like that. A hate like that always grows out of a great love.

Acacia. Do you mean to say that I was in love with that man? Do you know what you are telling me?

Juliana. I am not telling you anything.

Acacia. No. What you will do now is run and tell my mother.

Juliana. Is that what you are afraid of? I thought so. Now you are the one who is telling. You needn't worry, though. I'll not tell. She has enough on her mind, poor soul. God help us! [BERNABÉ enters.]

Bernabé. Here comes the master!

Juliana. Did you see him?

Bernabé. Yes. You wouldn't know him. He looks as if he had stepped from the grave.

Acacia. Let me out!

Juliana. Yes, let us all out—and shut your mouth, do you hear? What is done is done. Your mother must never know.

[*The women go out.*]

[*ESTEBAN and RUBIO enter, their guns over their shoulders.*]

Bernabé. Can—can I do anything?

Esteban. Nothing, Bernabé.

Bernabé. I'll tell the mistress.

Esteban. No, don't tell her; they'll find us.

Rubio. How about his wounds, eh?

Bernabé. Better. The doctor sent for these things. I'll take them in—unless you need me. [*Goes out.*]

Esteban. Here I am. What do you want me to do?

Rubio. What do I want you to do? This is your house; you belong here. A man's house is his castle. Running away, being afraid to face it, is to confess. It will ruin us both.

Esteban. Here I am; you have had your way. Now this woman will come and accuse me and raise the house. The judge will be here, and he will bring Tío Eusebio. What then?

Rubio. Why didn't you let Tío Eusebio's boys handle it themselves? They would have finished it. Now he is only wounded. He will squeal, and so will his father; so will all the women. They are the ones I am afraid of.

They will talk. Nobody can prove who shot Faustino. You were with his father; nobody saw me. I have a good pair of legs. I was with some friends two leagues away a few minutes before, and I set the clock ahead. When I left the house I took good care to have them notice it.

Esteban. Yes, we would have been safe if that had been all. But you talked; you gave yourself away.

Rubio. You ought to have killed me. That was the first time in my life that I ever was afraid. I never expected they would let Norbert go. I told you that we ought to go into court and have Acacia testify that Norbert had sworn he was going to kill Faustino, but you wouldn't listen. Do you mean to tell me that you couldn't have made her do it? We could have got others, too, to say the same. Then it would have been easy; they would never have let him go. I know I made a fool of myself, but when I saw that Norbert was free, that the law—yes, and Tío Eusebio—would never stop there, that they would look somewhere else, then I was afraid for the first time. I wanted to forget. So I began to drink, which I never do, and I talked. You ought to have killed me then; you had ground for it. They were talking already in the village; that was what scared me. When I heard that song—it put the blame here. Norbert and his father suspect. After what happened before, they have their eyes open. That is the talk that has got to be stopped, no matter what comes of it. That is the danger—the crime will be known by the cause. Nothing else counts. So long as nobody knows why he was killed, nobody will ever find out who killed him either.

Esteban. But why? Why was he killed? What was the use of killing anybody?

Rubio. I don't know. Don't ask me. Weren't you talking all the time? "If another man gets her, look out! Something happens." Then you told me she was going to be married. "I can't scare this one off; it's all over, he will take her away. I can't think. . . ." Didn't you come to me in the morning early again and again, before it was light, and wake me up and say: "Get up, Rubio; I haven't closed my eyes all night. I must get out. To the fields! I must walk!" And then we'd take our guns and go out and walk for hours, side by side, without speaking a word.

At last, when the fit has passed, and we'd put a few shots in the air so that nobody could say that we did no hunting when we went out to hunt, I'd tell you that we scared away the game; but you said we frightened evil thoughts: and down we'd sit on some hummock and then you would burst out laughing like one mad, as if some weight had been lifted from your soul, and you'd catch me around the neck and talk, and talk, and talk—you didn't know how you talked, nor what you said, nor why, nor whether it had any sense at all; but it always came to the same thing: "I am mad, crazy, a wild man! I cannot live like this. I want to die. I don't know what devil has gotten into me. This is torment, hell!" And then you'd shuffle the words again, over and over, but it was always the same, you were dying—death! And you talked death so long that one day death heard—and he came. And you know it.

Esteban. Stop! Why do you have to talk?

Rubio. Take care, master! Don't you touch me! I know what was in your mind when we were coming down the mountain. Make no mistake. You lagged behind. Another minute and your gun would have been at your shoulder. But don't you do it, master, don't you try! We'll stick together. I know how you feel; you're sick. You never want to see me again. If that would help, I'd get out. What did I care, anyway? It was nothing to me. Whatever I got you gave me afterward. It was your idea. I never asked. I don't need money. I don't drink, I don't smoke. All I want is to rove over the mountains, to do what I like, to be free. I want to be my own master. You trusted me, and I was proud of it. I know how you feel. We are like brothers. I'll take the blame. You needn't worry. They can grind me to powder but I'll never say a word. I'll tell them I did it—it was I—because—it's none of their business—just because. I don't care what they give me: they can make it ten years, fifteen. What's the difference? Then you fix it; you have influence. Only don't let them make it too much. Get busy; cut it down. Others have done the same. In four or five years everything will have blown over. Only I don't want you to forget. When I come out we will be brothers, the same as before. We can work together; we can do what we please. Only I mean to be my own master, to have power, to feel power in my hands!

Nobody can stand alone. We'll be brothers. Hush! Some one is coming—the mistress!

[*RAIMUNDA enters, carrying a water-jar. She sees ESTEBAN and RUBIO and stops short, dazed. After hesitating for a moment she proceeds to fill the jar from a pitcher.*]

Rubio. Señora!

Raimunda. Get out of my house! Don't you come near me! What are you doing here? I never want to see you again.

Rubio. Oh! You are going to see me again—and hear me.

Raimunda. What do you mean? This is my house.

Rubio. Just a word. Soon we will all be in court. We had better fix it beforehand. Because a few fools open their mouths is no reason why a good man should go to prison.

Raimunda. More than one will go. You don't expect to get out of it?

Rubio. I don't know. Only one will go, but that one will be I.

Raimunda. It will?

Rubio. But when I shut my mouth I don't want other people to talk. Take it from me: what you think is not so. Norbert and his father are back of these lies; they are the ones who do all the lying. They made up that song, too. It's a lie, and they know it.

Raimunda. Is that so? You have agreed then on your story? Well, I don't believe one word of it. Gossip and songs are nothing to me. I believe nothing but the truth, the truth that I know—and I know it so well that I have known it all along. I guessed it from the beginning. I might have thought—but no, I never thought anything of you. He, he might have confessed; it would have been only fair. He might have known that I would hold my tongue, not for him, but for this house—which was my father's house—for my daughter, for my own sake. But why should I keep still when everybody knows it, and the very stones shout? They sing it from the housetops.

Rubio. So long as you keep still, the rest can sing all they want to.

Raimunda. Keep still? To save you? I could scream at the very sight of you! I could raise the village!

Rubio. Don't be a fool! What's the use?

Raimunda. Of course you weren't a fool when you murdered a man. And you nearly

murdered another—in this house—or had him murdered.

Rubio. I wouldn't have been a fool if I had.

Raimunda. You are a coward! You are a murderer!

Rubio. Your wife is speaking to you, master.

Esteban. Rubio!

Rubio. You see he can hear.

Raimunda. Yes, hang your head before this man. What a humiliation! You are his slave for the rest of your life. Could any fate be more horrible? Now this house has a master. Thank God, he cannot be less jealous of its honor than you!

Esteban. Raimunda!

Raimunda. When I talk, you interrupt. You are not afraid of me.

Esteban. If I had been man enough, I would have put a bullet through my head, and have been done with it.

Rubio. Oh, master!

Esteban. No! Stop there! That's all I'll take from you. Get out! What are you waiting for? Do you want me to beg you on my knees?

Raimunda. Oh!

Rubio. No, master. I am going. [*To Raimunda.*] If it hadn't been for me, there wouldn't have been any murder, but you might have lost a child. Now, you have another. The blood made him faint; a bad turn, that was all. But he's better. I am a good doctor. Some time you can thank me for it. Don't forget. I'll show you how. [*Goes out.*]

Esteban. Don't cry any more. I can't bear to see you cry. I am not worth all these tears. I ought never to have come back; I ought to have starved amid the brambles and thickets—they should have hunted me down like a wolf. I would not have raised my hand. Don't reproach me! Over and over again I have said to myself more than you can say. I have called myself murderer, assassin, times without number. Let me go. This is no longer my home. Turn me out! I am only waiting for them to take me. I don't go out on the road and give myself up, because I am too weak; my heart sinks; I am at the end of my tether. If you don't want me, tell me to go, and I will creep onto the highway and throw myself down in the fields, like carrion which you cast from your door.

Raimunda. Yes, give yourself up! Bring shame and ruin on this house, drag my daugh-

ter's honor in the dust and mire of the village! I should have been the law to you; you ought to have thought of me. Do you suppose that I believe in these tears because this is the first time I ever saw you cry? Better you had cried your eyes out the day that wicked thought first entered your mind, rather than have turned them where you had no right. Now you cry—but what am I to do? Look at me. Nobody knows what I have been through. It could not be worse. I want to forget, but I must think—think how I can hide the shame which has fallen on this house, keep it out of men's sight, prevent a man from being dragged from this house to prison—a man I brought into it to be a father to my child! This was my father's house; here my brothers lived with the fear of God in their hearts, and from it they went to serve their King, or to marry, or to till other fields by their labor. When they re-entered these doors it was with the same honor with which they went forth. Don't cry; don't hang your head. Hold it high, as I do. In a few minutes the officers will be here to trap us all. Though the house burn, and they are in it, they shall not smell the smoke. Dry your eyes; you have wept blood. Take a sip of water—I wish it was poison. Don't drink so fast; you are overheated. The thorns have torn your skin. You deserved knives. Let me wash you off; it makes my blood creep to look at you.

Esteban. Raimunda! Wife! Pity me! You don't know. Don't talk to me. No, I am the one who must talk—I must confess as I shall confess at the hour of my doom! You don't know how I have struggled. I have wrestled all these years as with another man who was stronger than I, night and day, who was dragging me where I did not want to go.

Raimunda. But when—when did that evil thought first enter your mind? When was that unhappy hour?

Esteban. I don't know. It came upon me like a blight, all at once; it was there. All of us think some evil in our lives, but the thought passes away, it does no harm; it is gone. When I was a boy, one day my father beat me. Quick as a flash it came to me: "I wish he was dead!" But no sooner thought, than I was ashamed—I was ashamed to think that I had ever had such a thought. My heart stood still within me for fear that God had heard, that he would take him away. From

that day I loved him more, and when he died, years afterward, I grieved as much for that thought as I did for his death, although I was a grown man. And this might have been the same; but this did not go away. It became more fixed the more I struggled to shake it off. You can't say that I did not love you. I loved you more every day! You can't say that I cast my eyes on other women—and I had no thought of her. But when I felt her by me my blood took fire. When we sat down to eat, I was afraid to look up. Wherever I turned she was there, before me—always! At night, when we were in bed, and I was lying close by you in the midnight silence of the house, all I could feel was her. I could hear her breathe as if her lips had been at my ear. I wept for spite, for bitterness! I prayed to God, I scourged myself. I could have killed myself—and her! Words cannot tell the horror I went through. The few times that we were alone, I ran from her like a wild man. If I had stayed I don't know what might have happened: I might have kissed her, I might have dug my knife into her!

Raimunda. Yes, you were mad—and you did not know it. It could only have ended in death. Why didn't we find some man for her? She could have married. You ought not to have kept her from Norbert.

Esteban. It was not her marrying, it was her going away. I could not live without the feel of her; I craved her day and night. All her hate, her spite, her turning away—which she always did—cut me to the heart; then, I came to depend upon it. I could not live without it; it was part of my life. That is what it was—I didn't realize it myself, because it always seemed to me as if it could not be—such things could not really be. I was afraid to face it. But now, I have confessed it to you. It is true! It is true! I can never forgive myself, not even though you might forgive me.

Raimunda. The evil cannot be cured by forgiveness; if I do not forgive you, it will not take the evil away. When I first heard of it, it seemed to me that no punishment could be too severe. Now, I don't know. To do what you did, you must have been all evil. But you were always kind and good, in season and out, to my daughter, when she was a child, when she was grown—and to me. I have seen it with my own eyes. You were good to all the servants from the day that you entered

this house, to the men, to everybody who came near. You have been faithful and loyal, and worked hard for the honor of this house. A man cannot be good so long and become all bad in one day. Yet these things are; I know it. It chills my heart. When my mother was alive—God rest her soul!—we always laughed because she used to say that many a deed had been foretold in this world that afterward took place exactly as it had been foretold. We never believed it, but now I know it is true. The dead do not leave us when they die, though we lay them in the ground. They walk by the side of those that they loved in this life, of those that they hated with a hate that was stronger than death. They are with us, day and night. We do not see them, but they whisper in our ears. They put thoughts into our minds which are evil and wicked and strange, which we never can believe could be part of ourselves.

Esteban. Do you mean? . . .

Raimunda. Vengeance! This is vengeance from the other world. My daughter's father will not forgive me in heaven; he will never accept a second father for his child. There are some things which we cannot explain in this life. A good man like you cannot, all of a sudden, cease to be good; for you were good. . . .

Esteban. I was—I was always. When you say it, you don't know what happiness, what boundless joy it is to me!

Raimunda. Hush! Not so loud! I hear some one in the other part of the house. It is Norbert's father and his friends. They are going to take him away. If it had been the judge he would have come to this door. Stay here; I'll find out. Go in and wash; change your shirt. Don't let any one see you like this. You look. . . .

Esteban. Like a murderer, eh? Say it.

Raimunda. No, no, Esteban! We mustn't dwell on these things. We must stop this talk; that is first. Then we can think. Acacia can go to the nuns for a few days at Encinar. They are fond of her; they always ask how she is. Then I can write to my sister-in-law, Eugenia; she likes her. She can go to Andrada and live with her. She might marry, who knows? There are fine boys there—the town is rich—and she is the best match in our village. Then she could come back and have her children, and we would be grandfather and grandmother, and grow old with them

around us, and be happy once more in this house. If only. . . .

Esteban. What?

Raimunda. If only

Esteban. The dead man.

Raimunda. Yes. He will always be here, between us.

Esteban. Always. The rest we can forget.
[*Goes into the room. ACACIA enters.*]

Raimunda. Acacia! Were you there?

Acacia. Yes. Why not? Can't you see? Norbert's father is here with the men.

Raimunda. What are they doing?

Acacia. They seem more reasonable; they were surprised to find him better. Now they are waiting for the judge. He is down at Sotillo examining the men. He will come here as soon as he is done.

Raimunda. I'll keep an eye on them.

Acacia. I have something to say to you first, mother.

Raimunda. You? Something to say? What is the matter with you? I am frightened. You never say anything.

Acacia. I heard what you mean to do with me.

Raimunda. You were listening at the key-hole, were you?

Acacia. Yes, because it was my duty to hear. I had to know what you were doing with this man. It seems that I am the one who is in the way in this house. I have done nothing wrong, so I have to take the blame, while you stay here and enjoy yourself with your husband. You forgive him and turn me out, so that you can be alone together!

Raimunda. What are you talking about? Who is turning you out? Who ever put that idea into your head?

Acacia. I heard what you said. You want to send me to the convent at Encinar and shut me up, I suppose, for the rest of my life.

Raimunda. How can you say such a thing? Didn't you tell me yourself that you wanted to go there and stay for a few days with the nuns? Didn't I refuse to let you go for fear that you would never come back, if you once saw the inside of the cloister? How often have you begged me to let you go to your Aunt Eugenia? Now, when it would be a good thing for us all, for the good of the family, which is your family—I tell you that we must hold our heads high—now what do you want me to do? Do you expect me to give

up my husband—the man it was your duty to love as a father?

Acacia. You are as bad as Juliana. I suppose it was all my fault?

Raimunda. I don't say that. But he never looked on you as a daughter because you were never a daughter to him.

Acacia. I suppose I flaunted myself in his face? I suppose I made him kill Faustino?

Raimunda. Not so loud! Somebody might hear!

Acacia. Well, this time you won't find it so easy to have your way. You want to save this man and hush it up, but I am going to tell what I know to the judge, to everybody. I have only my honor to think of, not that of a man who hasn't any, who never had any—who is a criminal!

Raimunda. Silence! Not so loud! It freezes my heart to hear you. You hate him—and I had almost forgiven him!

Acacia. Yes, I do hate him. I always did hate him, and he knows it. If he doesn't want me to speak, to denounce him, let him kill me. I can die—that is what I can do—die. Let him kill me! then, perhaps, once for all, you might learn to hate him.

Raimunda. Hush, I say!—Here he comes.
[*ESTEBAN enters.*] Esteban!

Esteban. She is right. She is not the one who ought to go. Only I don't want her to give me up. I will do it myself. I am strong now. I will go out on the road to meet them. Let me go, Raimunda. You have your child. You forgive me, but she never will. She hated me from the beginning.

Raimunda. No, Esteban, don't you go! Esteban, my life!

Esteban. No, let me go, or I will call Norbert's father. I will tell him. . . .

Raimunda [*To ACACIA*]. Now you see what you have done. It was your fault. Esteban! Esteban!

Acacia. Mother, don't let him go!

Raimunda. Ah!

Esteban. No, she wants to betray me. Why did you hate me like this? You never once called me father. You don't know how I loved you!

Acacia. Mother, mother—

Esteban. *La Malquerida!* The Passion Flower! I hang my head. But once—once how I could have loved you!

Raimunda. For once, call him father.

Esteban. She will never forgive me.

Raimunda. But she must! Throw your arms about his neck. Call him father. Even the dead will forgive us then, and be happy in our happiness.

Esteban. Daughter!

Acacia. Esteban! . . . My God! Esteban!

Esteban. Ah!

Raimunda. But you don't call him father. Has she fainted? Ah! Lip to lip, and you clutch her in your arms! Let go, let go! Now I see why you won't call him father. Now I see that it was your fault—and I curse you!

Acacia. Yes, it was. Kill me! It is true, it is true! He is the only man I ever loved.

Esteban. Ah!

Raimunda. What do you say? What is that? I will kill you—yes, and be damned with it!

Esteban. Stand back!

Acacia. Save me!

Esteban. Stand back, I say!

Raimunda. Ah! Now I see! It is plain to me now. And it is just as well! What is one murder to me? We can all die. Here! Come, everybody! The murderer! I have the murderer! Take this wicked woman, for she is not my child!

Acacia. Run! Get away!

Esteban. Yes, together—to hell! For I am damned for love of you. Come! They can hunt us like wild beasts among the rocks. To love you and hold you, I will be as the wild beasts, that know neither father nor mother!

Raimunda. Help! Help! Come quick! The murderer! The murderer!

[RUBIO, BERNABÉ and JULIANA ap-

pear simultaneously at different doors, followed by others from the village.]

Esteban. Out of my way! Take care who crosses me!

Raimunda. Stay where you are! The murderer!

Esteban. Out of my way, I tell you!

Raimunda. Over my dead body!

Esteban. Yes— [Raising his gun he shoots RAIMUNDA.]

Raimunda. Ah!

Juliana. God in heaven!—Raimunda!

Rubio. What have you done?

A Man. Kill him!

Esteban. Yes, kill me! I don't defend myself.

Bernabé. No! Put the law on him!

Juliana. It was this man, this wretched man!—Raimunda!—He has killed her—Raimunda! Don't you hear?

Raimunda. Yes, Juliana. Don't let me die without confession. I am dying now. This blood. . . . No matter—Acacia! Acacia!

Juliana. Acacia!—Where is she?

Acacia. Mother, mother!

Raimunda. Ah! Then you are not crying for him? It consoles me.

Acacia. No, mother! You are my mother!

Juliana. She is dying! Quick—Raimunda!

Acacia. Mother, mother!

Raimunda. This man cannot harm you now. You are saved. Blessed be the blood that saves, the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ!

THE END

HE WHO GETS SLAPPED

By LEONID ANDREYEV

Translated from the Russian by GREGORY ZILBOORG

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LEONID ANDREYEV AND HIS PLAYS

LEONID ANDREYEV, the author of *He Who Gets Slapped*, was born in Orel, Russia, in 1871, and died in Finland, in 1919. His reputation was first established by his tales and short-stories. Maxim Gorki was his friend and literary god-father. Between 1905 and 1917 Andreyev wrote twenty-seven plays, singularly unequal in merit, but of which at least half a dozen may be considered masterpieces. During this prolific period of playwriting his fame eclipsed that of all other contemporary Russian dramatists, though his work owed not a little to the stimulus given to it by the plays of Gorki and of Tchekhov.

Andreyev's subject-matter is remarkably complex and varied. Much of it was undoubtedly suggested by the untoward conditions and the dreadful events of his own period. It was a time of wars and assassinations; of wretchedness among the peasantry; of unrest and pessimism in the world of thought. Andreyev lived in the midst of all this; it was a part of him; he could not escape from it. But in his plays, such as *Anathema* and *To the Stars*, he transmutes and universalizes these conditions and events and frees them from the limitations of time and place. He finds his material also within his own mind, a too-delicately poised and rather morbid mind, lodged in a body never free from ills. In the plays that spring primarily from this source are presented perplexing questions of ethics and personality, as in *The Black Maskers*; the gloomy pageant of man's life, as in *The Life of Man*; the deterioration of moral fibre under the impact of bitter and degrading experiences, as in *Katherina Ivanovna* and *He Who Gets Slapped*.

Andreyev's method of treatment takes as wide a range as his material; from convincing realism, as in *Katherina*, through allegorical abstraction, as in *The Life of Man*, and to the wildest fantasy, as in *The Black Maskers*. Whatever the method, symbolism is always present in greater or less degree, either symbolism in details or symbolism that informs and renders significant the action as a whole.

All Russian drama, maintained Andreyev, had touched only the surface of life, and had relied for its effect too much upon external action; hence his theory of a "panpsychic" theatre, a "theatre of the soul", which should represent primarily the inner action of the spirit. He asserts that the most dramatic thing in the world is Thought—and in this is imitative of Maeterlinck. Had he consistently written by this theory alone, his plays would have been purely static. Fortunately, his sheer talent as a story-teller provides enough external movement to hold the interest of the audience.

Undoubtedly, Andreyev's work was influenced by that of other dramatists—the Russians and, from the outside, Maeterlinck, at least, and in many respects it is imitative. Yet none the less it is both powerful and original. Such pictorial imagination, such variety of characterization and insight into the depths of complex characters, such strong, swiftly-moving plots, implying an inner action more significant than the external—are qualities that, in their totality, are perhaps nowhere excelled in modern drama. In all these traits *He Who Gets Slapped* is characteristic of Andreyev. For all its surface realism, the entire play is a symbol. The man of fine sensibilities and intelligence, cheated by life and betrayed by his friend, turns bitter, and revenges himself on the world by deliberately making himself a laughing-stock—and the world takes up his challenge and mocks him delightedly, thereby making itself more ridiculous than the clown himself. It has been said that the play is partly autobiographic, since Andreyev felt that his own ideas, like those of He, had been stolen and prostituted, and that, like the clown, he had been betrayed by his friends.

He Who Gets Slapped was first produced in 1915 in Moscow by the Moscow Art Theatre. Its first production in English was in London in 1921 under the title of *The Painted Laugh*. Under its present title it was repeated for a longer run in London in 1926. In the meantime it had been first produced in America by Alexander Dean, at the University of Montana, in 1921, with the Montana Masquers, Maurice Brown, and Ellen Van Volkenberg. In January, 1922, it was presented in New York by the Theatre Guild.

CHARACTERS

CONSUELO, *a bareback rider in a circus.*
Billed as "The Bareback Tango
Queen"

MANCINI, *Consuelo's father*

HE, *a clown in Briquet's circus. Billed as*
"HE, The One Who Gets
Slapped"

BRIQUET, *manager of the circus*

ZINIDA, *a lion tamer, Briquet's wife*

ALFRED BEZANO, *a bareback rider*

A GENTLEMAN

BARON REGNARD

JACKSON, *a clown*

TILLY }
POLLY } *musical clowns*

THOMAS, ANGELICA, *and other actors and*
actresses of Briquet's circus.

The action takes place in one of the large cities of France at the present day.

HE WHO GETS SLAPPED

ACT ONE

A very large, rather dirty room with whitewashed walls. To the left, in a niche, is a window, the only outside window in the room, opening on a court-yard. The light from it is so dim that even by day the electricity has to be turned on.

At the very top of the centre-back wall is a row of small dusty windows. They open on the circus hall. At night, when the performance is going on a bright light shines through. By day they are dark. In the same wall is a large white door, reached by two stone steps, and nailed fast.

On the right, almost in the corner, is a high, wide, arched doorway which leads to the stables and the ring. By day it opens into pale darkness, at night into pale light.

The room is used for many purposes. It is the office of Papa Briquet, manager of the circus; here he keeps his little desk. It is the cloak-room of some of the actors. It is also the room where the cast gathers between calls, during rehearsals or performances. Again, it is a checkroom for used circus property, such as gilt armchairs, scenery for pantomimes, and other wares of the circus household. The walls are covered with circus announcements and glaring posters.

The time is morning. In the circus hall a rehearsal is going on, and preparations are being made for the evening performance. As the curtain goes up, the cracking whip and the shouts of the riding-master are heard from the ring. The stage is empty for a few seconds, then enter Tilly and Polly, the musical clowns, practising a new march. Playing on tiny pipes, they step from the dark doorway to the window. Their music is agreeable to the ear, but small, mincing, artificially clown-like, like their mincing steps; they wear jackets and resemble each other; same smooth-shaven face, same height; Tilly, the younger, has a scarf around his neck; both have their derbies on the backs of their heads. Tilly

glances through the window, then they turn about, still marching.

Polly [interrupting the march]. Stop, you're out again! Now listen—[He stands close to TILLY and plays into his face. TILLY absent-mindedly listens, scratching his nose.] There! Come on now! [They resume their music and marching. As they reach the door they meet the manager and MANCINI; the latter walks behind the manager, and is gnawing at the knob of his gold-mounted cane. COUNT MANCINI is tall and slight. The seams of his clothes are worn and he keeps his coat buttoned tight. He assumes extremely graceful manners, takes affected poses, and has a special fondness for toying with his cane, with aristocratic stylishness. When he laughs, which happens often, his thin sharp face takes on a marked resemblance to a satyr. The manager, "PAPA" BRIQUET, is a stout quiet man of average height. His bearing is hesitant. The clowns make room for the gentlemen. The manager looks questioningly at the older man.]

Polly [with an affected accent.] Our music for the pantomime! The March of the Ants!

Briquet. Ha! Yes!

[The gentlemen walk in. The clowns resume their music, POLLY marching on, then turning, the younger following.]

Polly. Papa Briquet, Jack is working very badly to-day.

Briquet. What's the matter with him?

Polly. He has a sore throat. You'd better take a look at him.

Briquet. All right. Come on, Jack. Open your mouth! Wider—wider. [Turns clown's face to the light near the window and examines him closely and seriously.] Just smear it with iodine.

Polly. I told him so. I said it was nothing! Oh! Come on. [They go away playing, marching, practising their funny mincing steps. The manager sits down. MAN-

CINI strikes a pose by the wall, smiling ironically.]

Mancini. So. You give them medical treatment, too! Look out, Papa Briquet, you have no licence.

Briquet. Just a little advice. They're all so afraid for their lives.

Mancini. His throat is simply burnt with whiskey. These two fellows get drunk every night. I am amazed, Papa Briquet, to see you pay so little attention to their morals. [He laughs.]

Briquet. You make me sick, Mancini.

Mancini. Count Mancini is at your service!

Briquet. You make me sick, Count Mancini. You poke your nose into everything, you disturb the artists in their work. Some day you'll get a thrashing, and I warn you that I shan't interfere.

Mancini. As a man of superior associations and education I cannot be expected to treat your actors as my equals! What more can you ask, Briquet? You see that I do you the honour of speaking with you quite familiarly, quite simply.

Briquet. Ha! ha! ha! [Slightly threatening] Really!—

Mancini. Never mind my joke. What if they did dare attack me—ever seen this, Briquet? [He draws a stiletto out of his cane and advances it silently.] Useful little thing. By the way, you have no idea of the discovery I made yesterday in a suburb. Such a girl! [Laughs.] Oh, well! all right, all right—I know you don't like that sort of sport. But look here, you must give me a hundred francs!

Briquet. Not a sou.

Mancini. Then I'll take away Consuelo—that's all—

Briquet. Your daily threat!

Mancini. Yes, my threat! And you would do the same, if you were as shamefully hard up as I am. Now look here, you know as well as I do that I have to live up to my name somehow, keep up the family reputation. Just because the tide of ill-fortune which struck my ancestors compelled me to make my daughter, the Countess Veronica, a bareback rider—to keep us from starving—do you understand—you heartless idiot!

Briquet. You chase the girls too much! Some day you'll land in jail, Mancini!

Mancini. In jail? Oh, no! Why, I have

to uphold our name, the splendour of my family [laughs], haven't I? The Mancinis are known all over Italy for their love of girls—just girls! Is it my fault if I must pay such crazy prices for what my ancestors got free of charge? You're nothing but an ass, a *parvenu* ass. How can you understand Family Traditions? I don't drink—I stopped playing cards after that accident—no, you need not smile. Now if I give up the girls, what will be left of Mancini? Only a coat of arms, that's all!—In the name of family traditions, give me a hundred francs!

Briquet. I told you no, I won't.

Mancini. You know that I leave half of the salary for Consuelo—but—perhaps you think I do not love my child—my only daughter, all that remains to me as a memory of her sainted mother—what cruelty! [Pretends to cry, wipes his eyes with a small and dirty lace handkerchief, embroidered with a coronet.]

Briquet. Why don't you say, rather, that she is foolish enough to give you half her salary. You make me sick—

[Enter ZINIDA, the lion tamer; burningly beautiful, her self-confident, commanding gestures at first glance give an impression of languor. She is BRIQUET's unmarried wife.]

Zinida [to MANCINI]. Good morning.

Mancini. Madame Zinida! This barbarian, this brute may pierce me with his dagger, but I cannot control the expression of my love! [Kneels facetiously before her] Madame! Count Mancini has the honour of asking you to be his wife. . . .

Zinida [to BRIQUET]. Money?

Briquet. Yes.

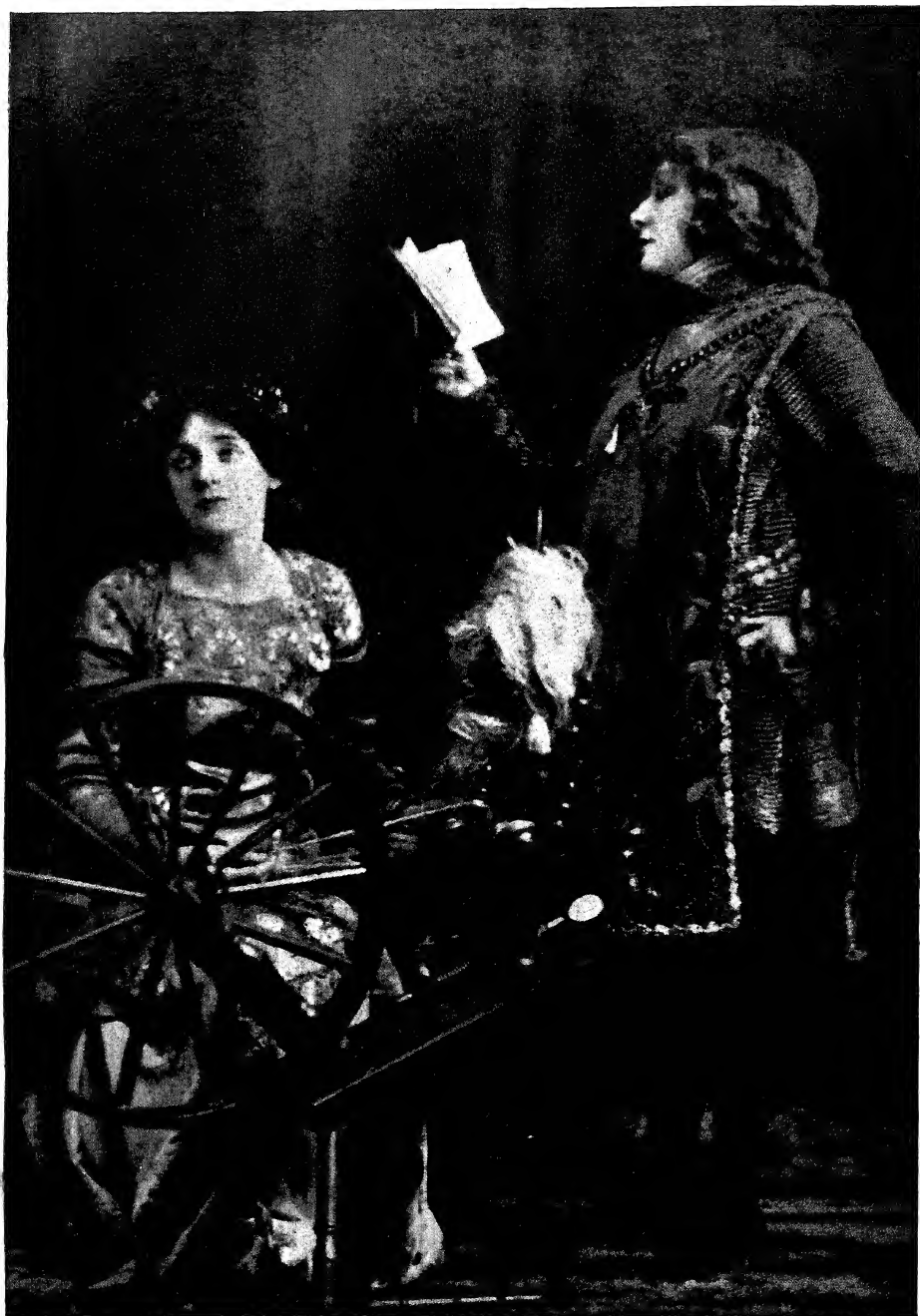
Zinida. Don't give him any. [Sits down wearily on a torn sofa, shuts her eyes. MANCINI gets up and wipes his knees.]

Mancini. Duchess! Don't be cruel. I am no lion, no tiger, no savage beast which you are accustomed to tame. I am merely a poor domestic animal, who wants, miaow, miaow a little green grass.

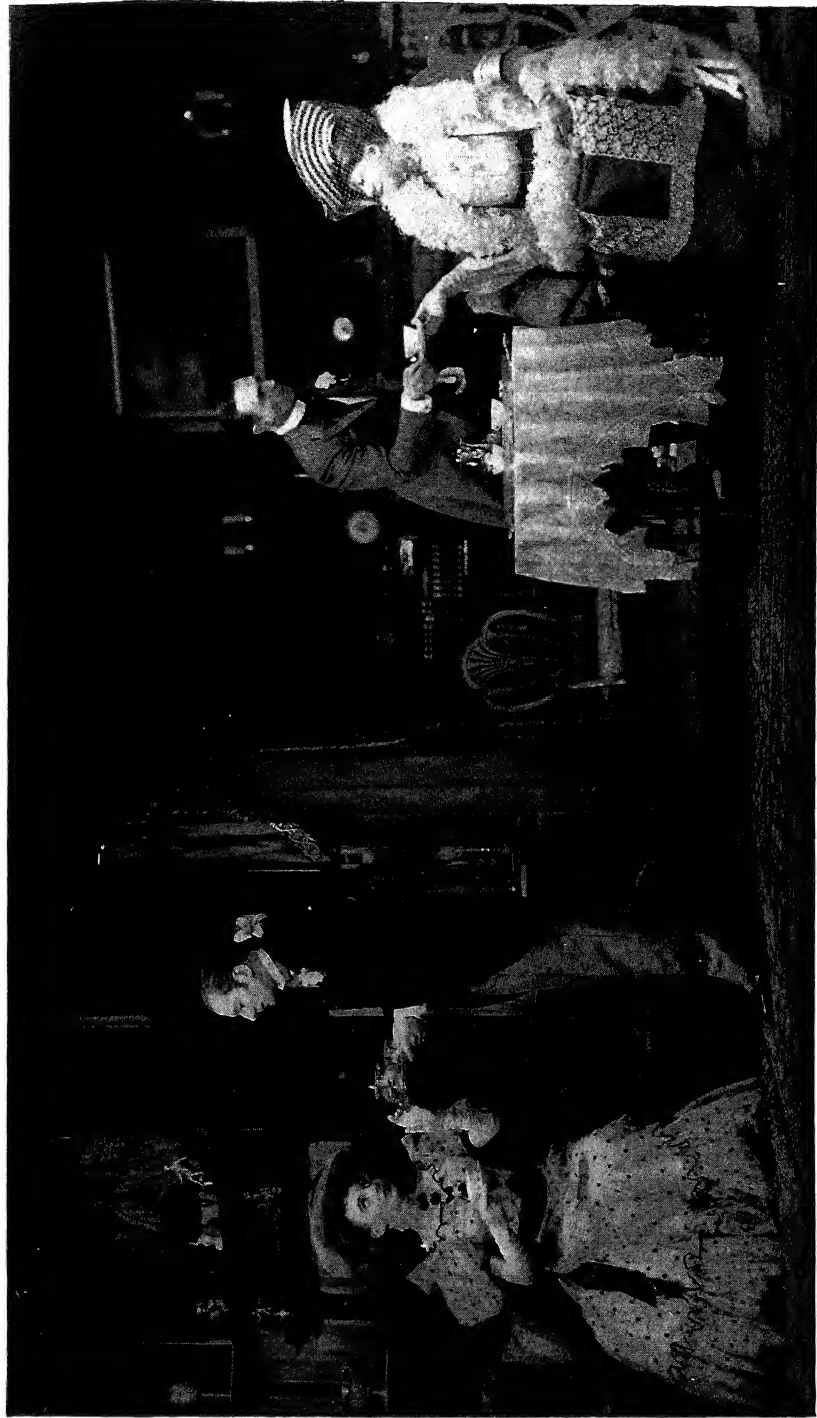
Zinida [without opening her eyes]. Jim tells me you have a teacher for Consuelo. What for?

Mancini. The solicitude of a father, duchess, the solicitude and the tireless anxiety of a loving heart. The extreme misfortunes of our family, when I was a child.

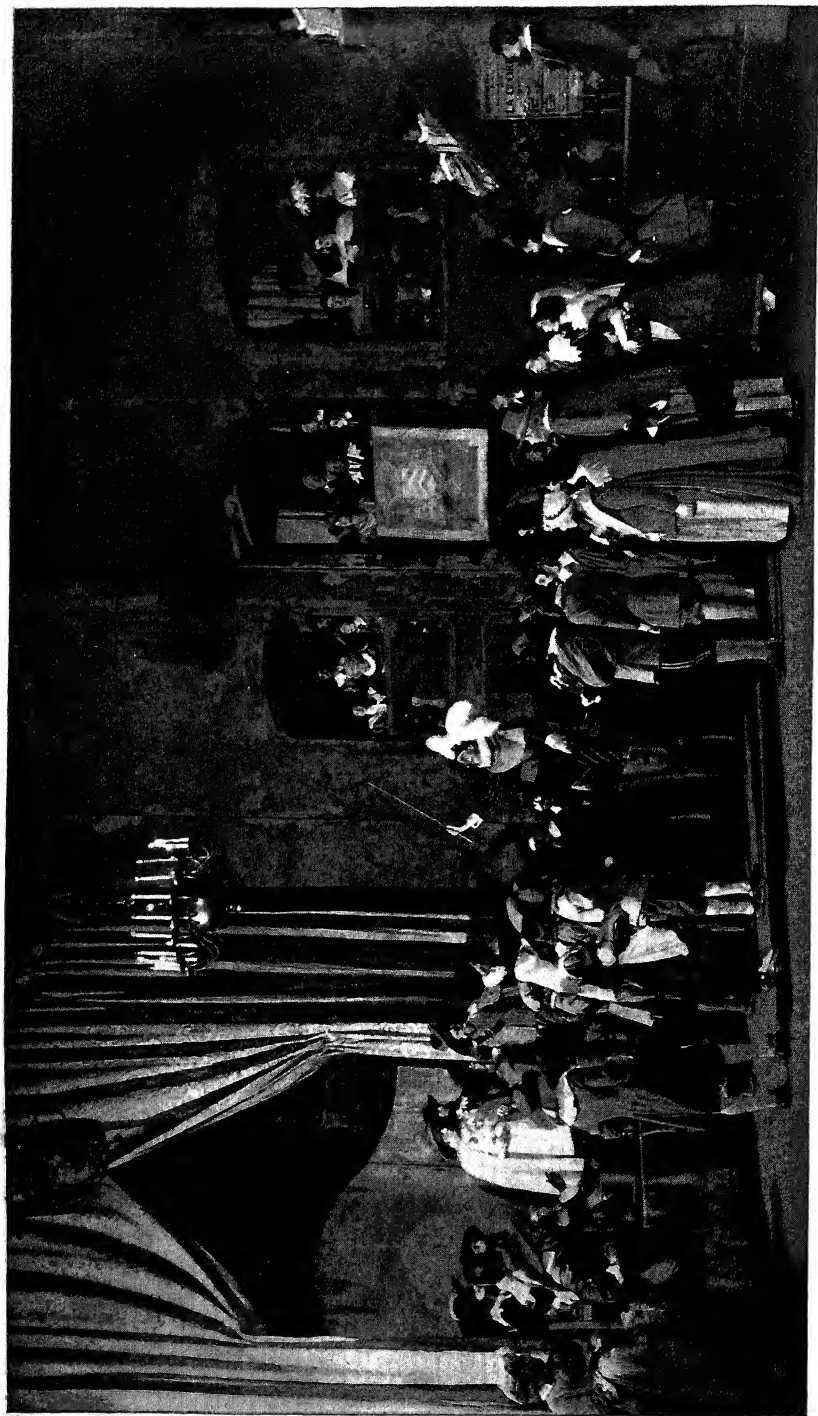
ILLUSTRATIONS



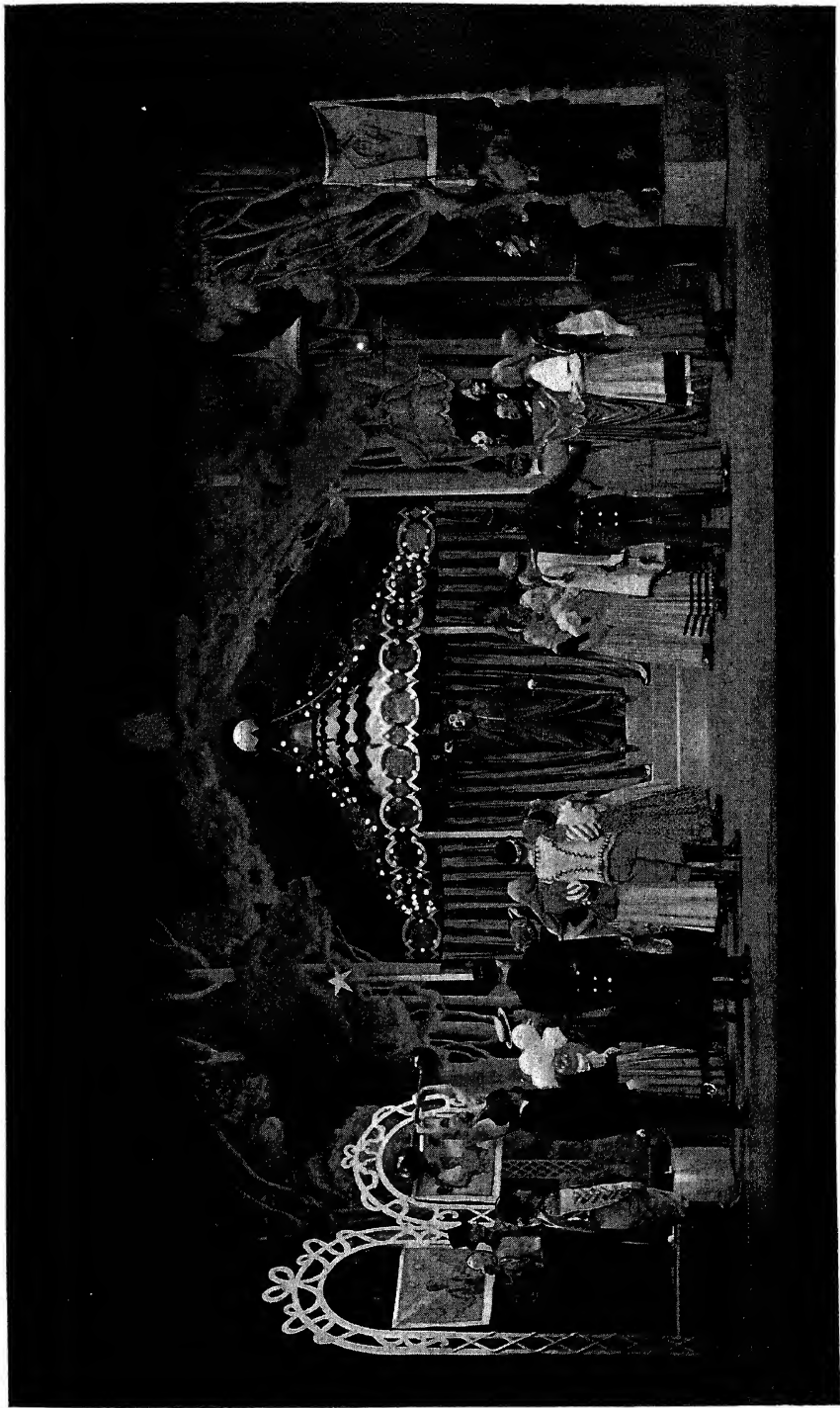
PELLEÁS AND MÉLISANDE, ACT III, SCENE I. Mrs. Patrick Campbell as Mélisande, Mme. Sarah Bernhardt as Pelléas. (Bruguière Collection, New York Public Library Theater Collection.)



THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST, Act I. *Lady Bracknell*: "I've quite a treat for you tonight, Algernon. I am going to send you down with Mary Farquhar." (Cf. p. 133.) Pamela Brown, John Gielgud, Robert Flemyng, Margaret Rutherford in the Theater Guild production. (Photo by Vandamm)



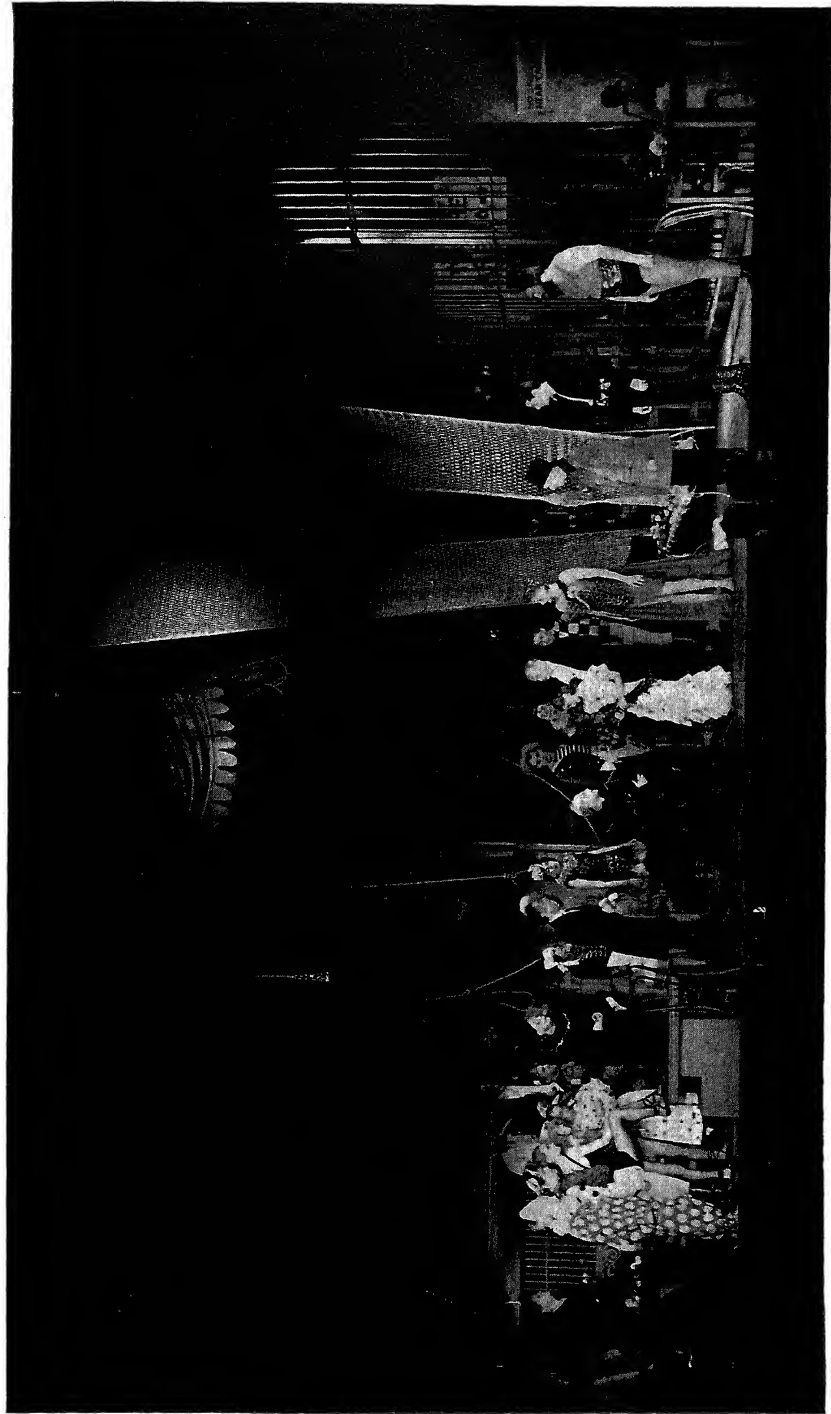
CYRANO DE BERGERAC, Act I. *Cyrano*: "Ah! I shall lose my temper!" (Cf. p. 169.) Walter Hampden production of Brian Hooker's version of Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac*, with settings by Claude Bragdon. (Photo by White)



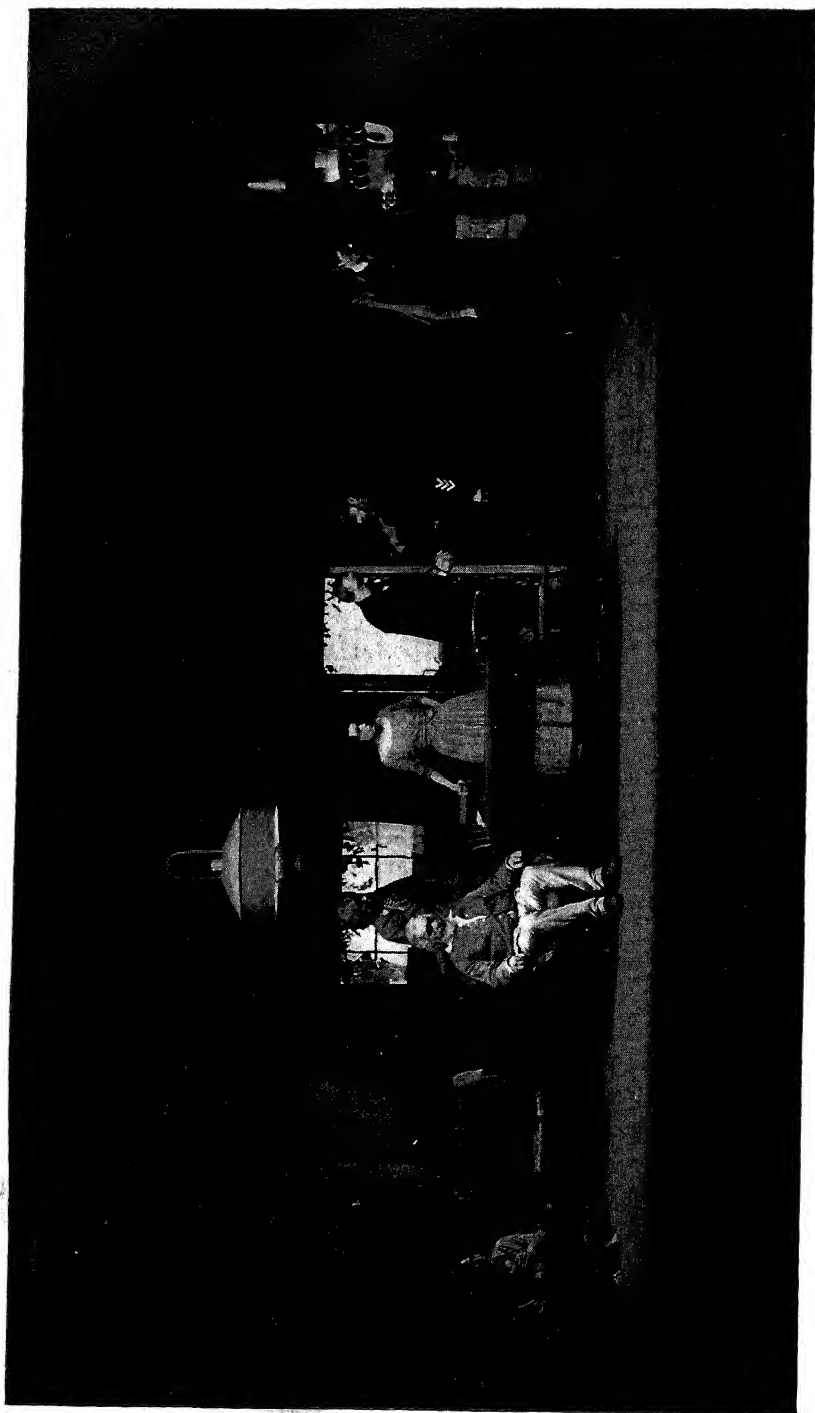
LILIOM, PROLOGUE. Burgess Meredith as Liliom haranguing the crowd. (Photo by Vandamm)



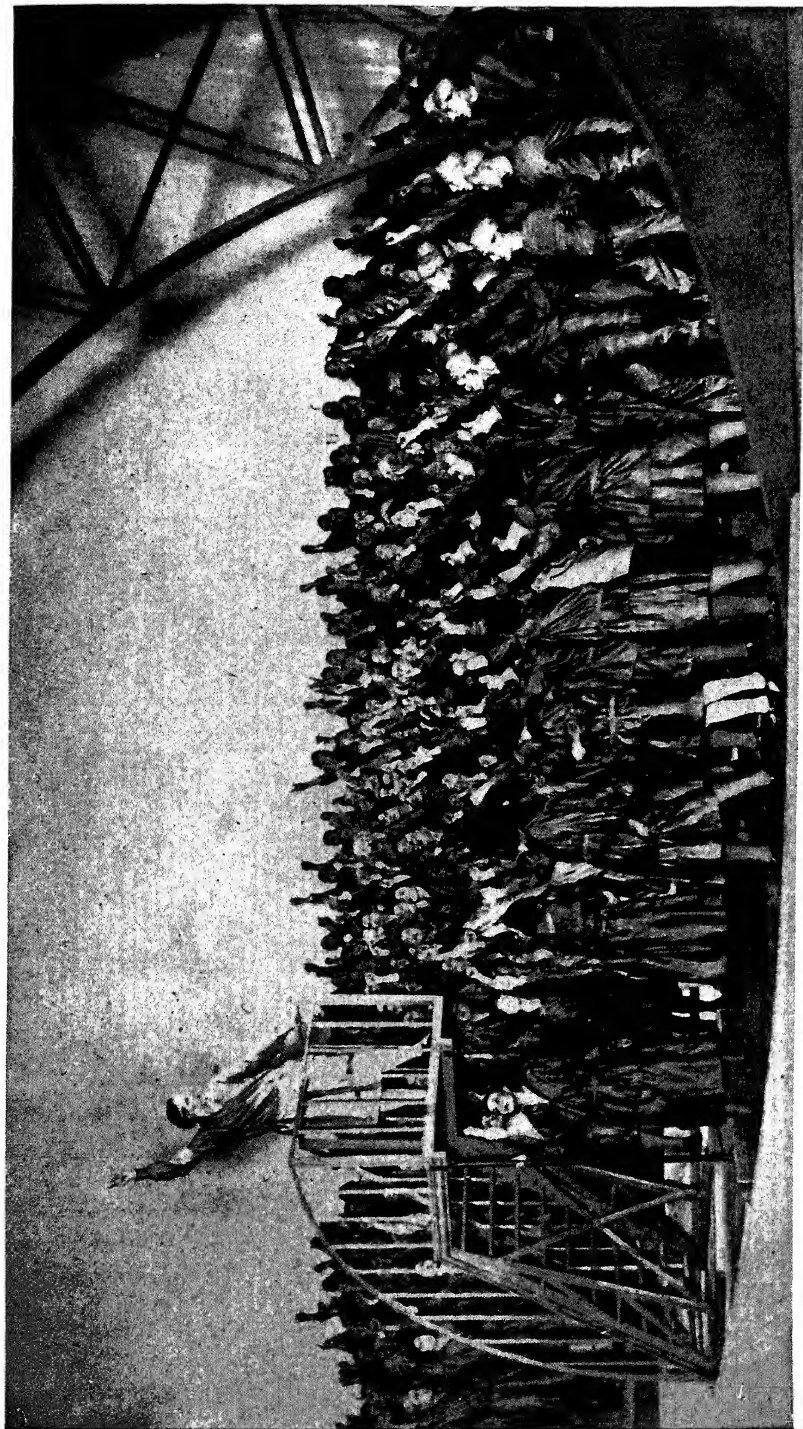
THE RATS, ACT V. *Mrs. John*: "Paul, I couldn't do no different. I had to do that."
(Cf. p. 453.) Drawing of the original German production. (Drawing from the *Illustrirte Zeitung*. New York Public Library Theater Collection.)



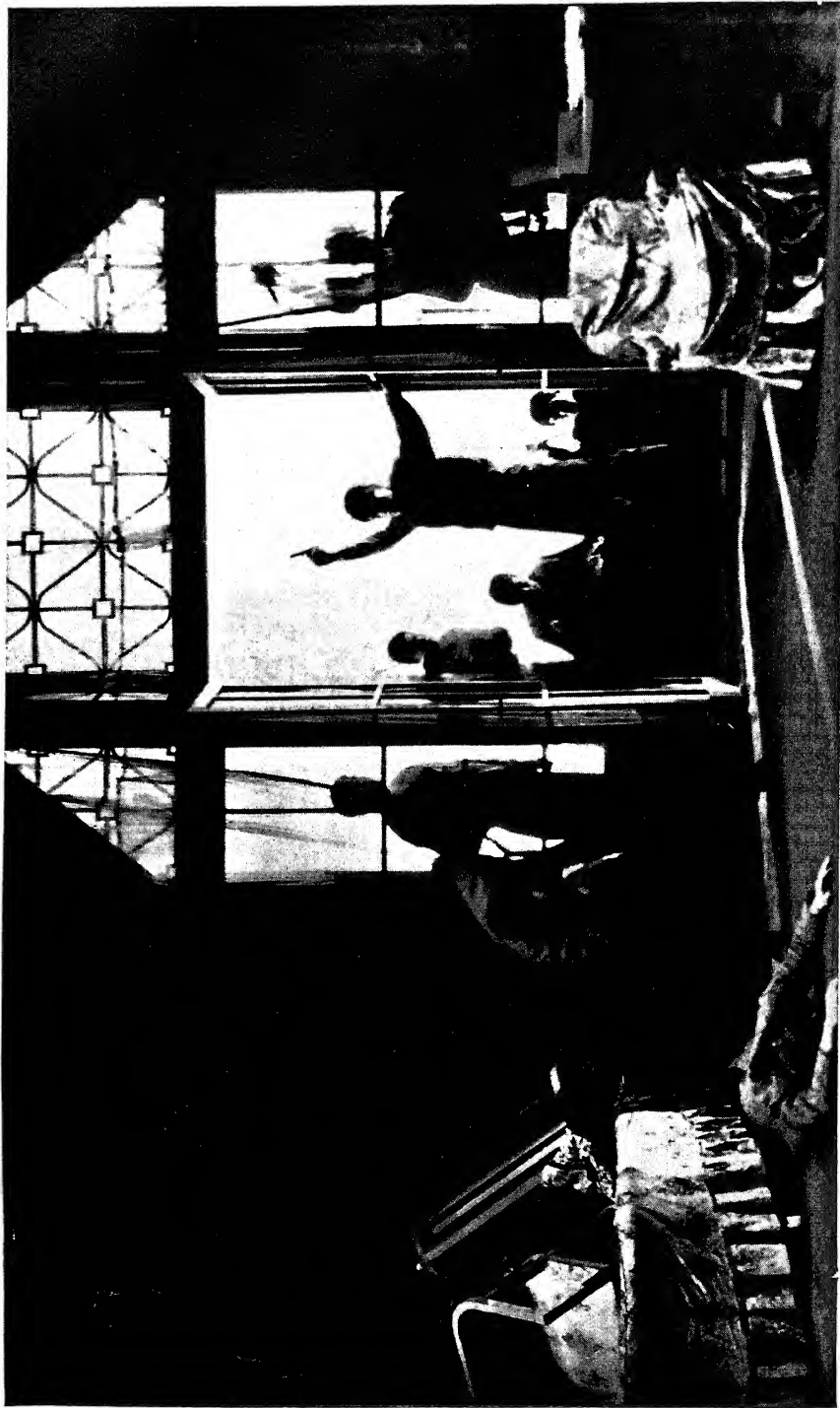
HE WHO GETS SLAPPED, Act IV. *He*: "*Baron!* Will you permit me to make a toast?" (Cf. p. 521.) Dennis King as *He* in the Theater Guild production. (Photo by Vandamm)



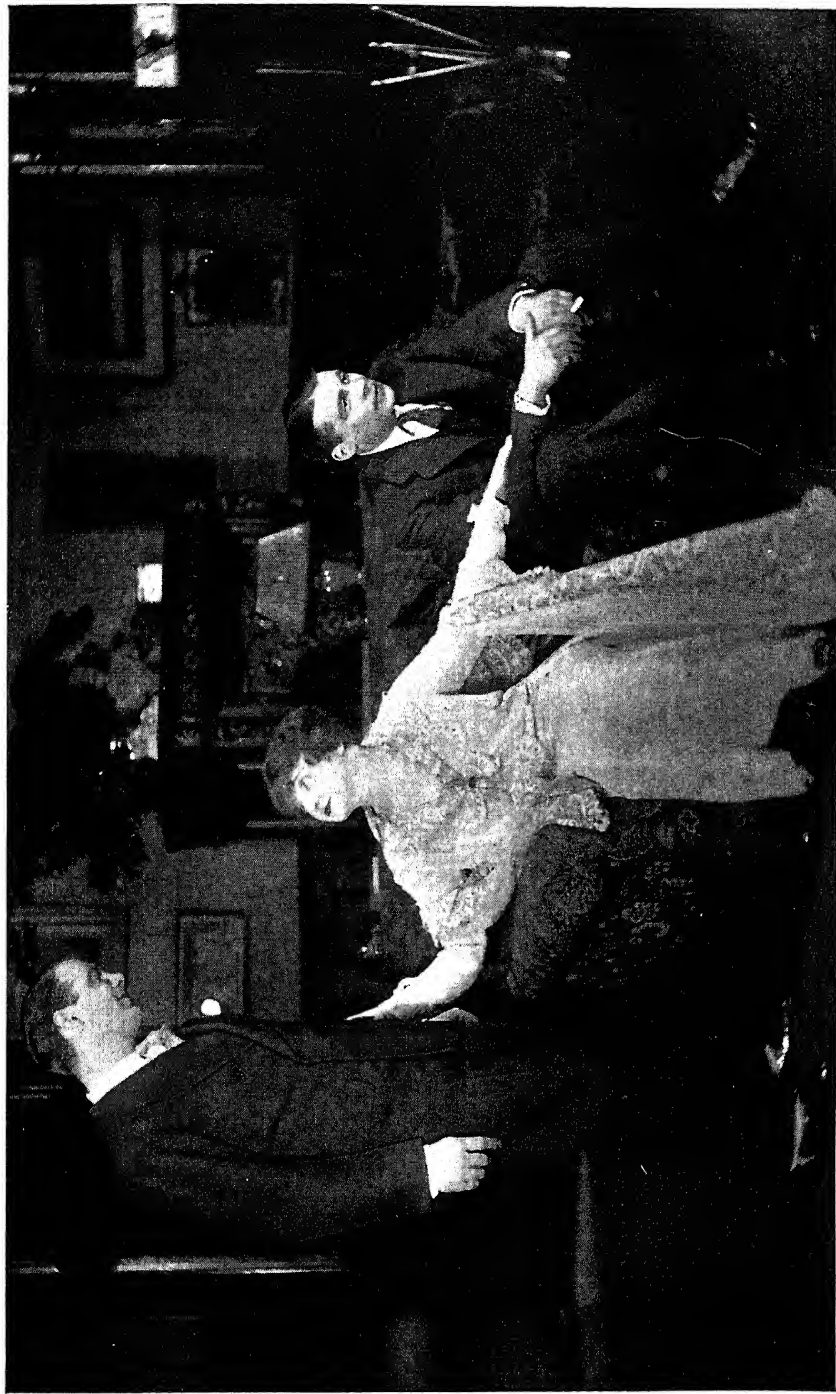
JOHN FERGUSON, Act III. *James Caesar*: "I'm not sorry he's dead, but it wasn't me that killed him." (Cf. p. 563.) Dudley Digges, Helen Wesley, Augustin Duncan in the Theater Guild production. (Photo by Vandamm)



GAS—I, Act IV. *Mother*: "Mothers and Mothers, you!—sons cry out in you—do not strangle their cries; stay away from the works. . . ." (Cf. p. 619.) Produced by the Stadttheater, Amsterdam. (Photo from *Das Theater*. New York Public Library Theater Collection.)



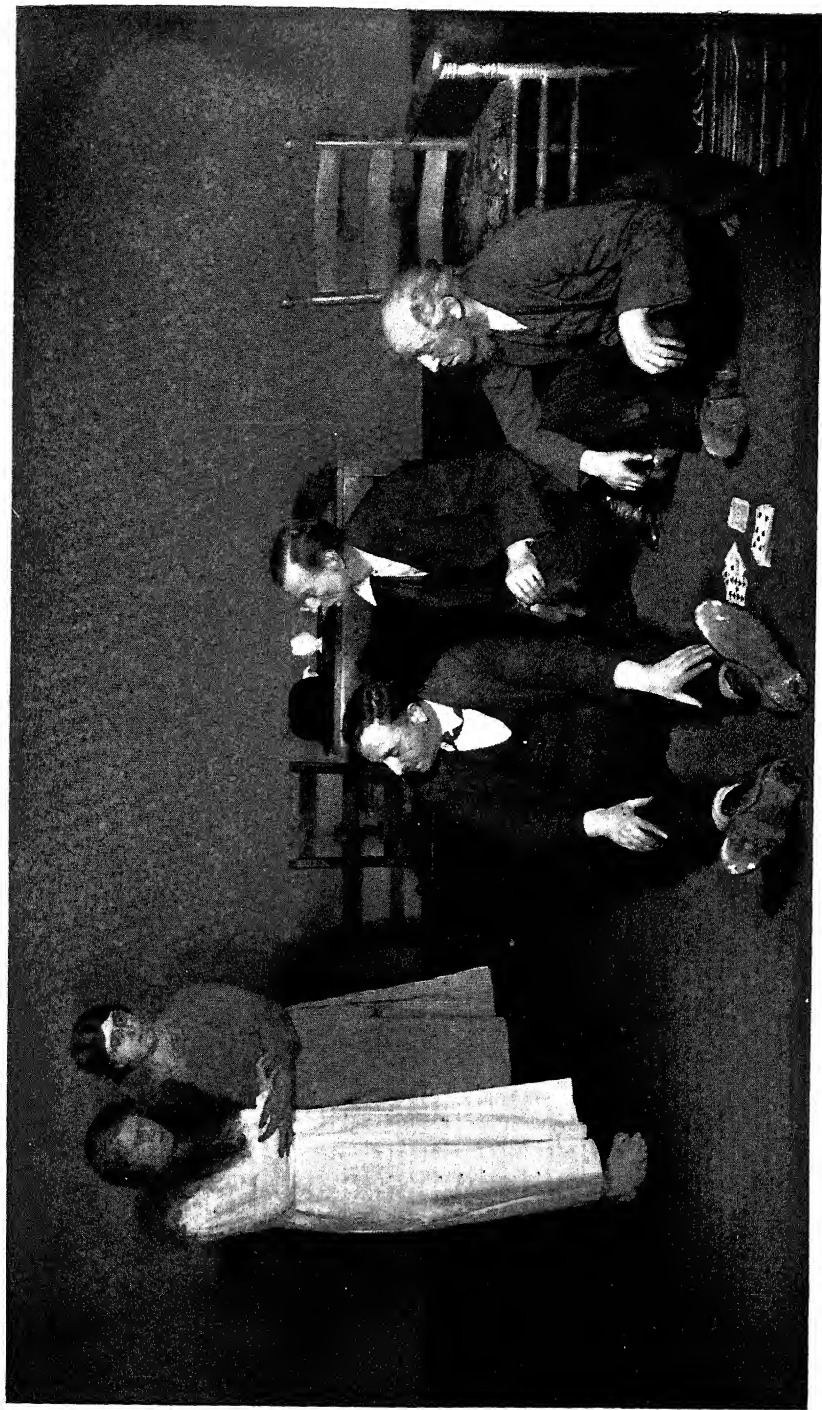
R.U.R., Act III. *Radius*: "Finished him?" (Cf. p. 670.) Theater Guild production.
(Bruguère Collection, New York Public Library.)



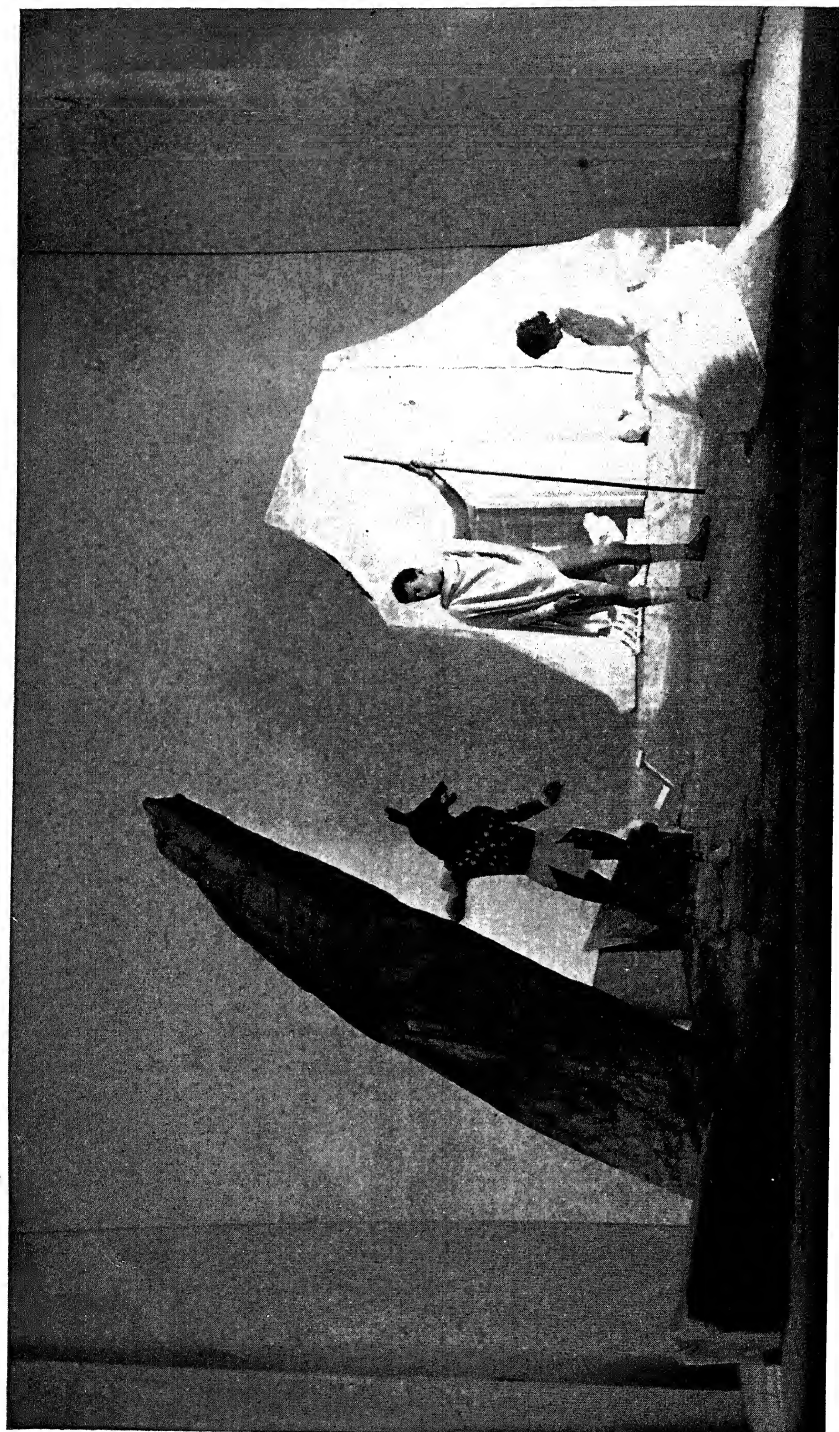
THE SILVER CORD, Act III. *Mrs. Phelps*: "My two boys in partnership! Oh, that's always been my dream!" (Cf. p. 715.) *Laura Hope Crews as Mrs. Phelps.* (Photo by Vandamm)



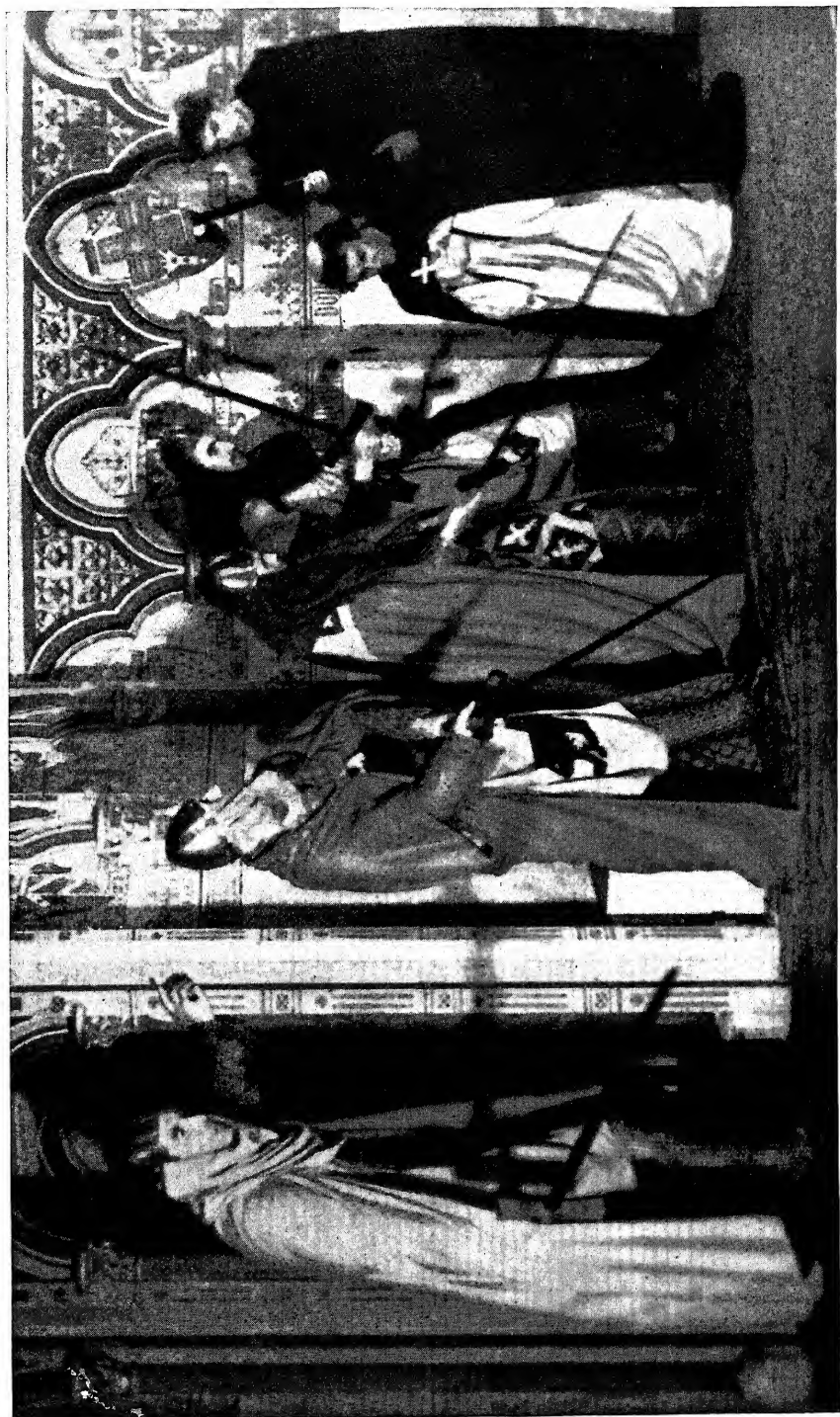
THE GREAT GOD BROWN, Act IV, Scene 2. *Margaret*: "My lover! My husband! My boy! . . . You can never die till my heart dies!" (Cf. p. 798.) William Harrigan, Anne Shoemaker, Leona Hogarth. (Bruguère Collection, New York Public Library.)



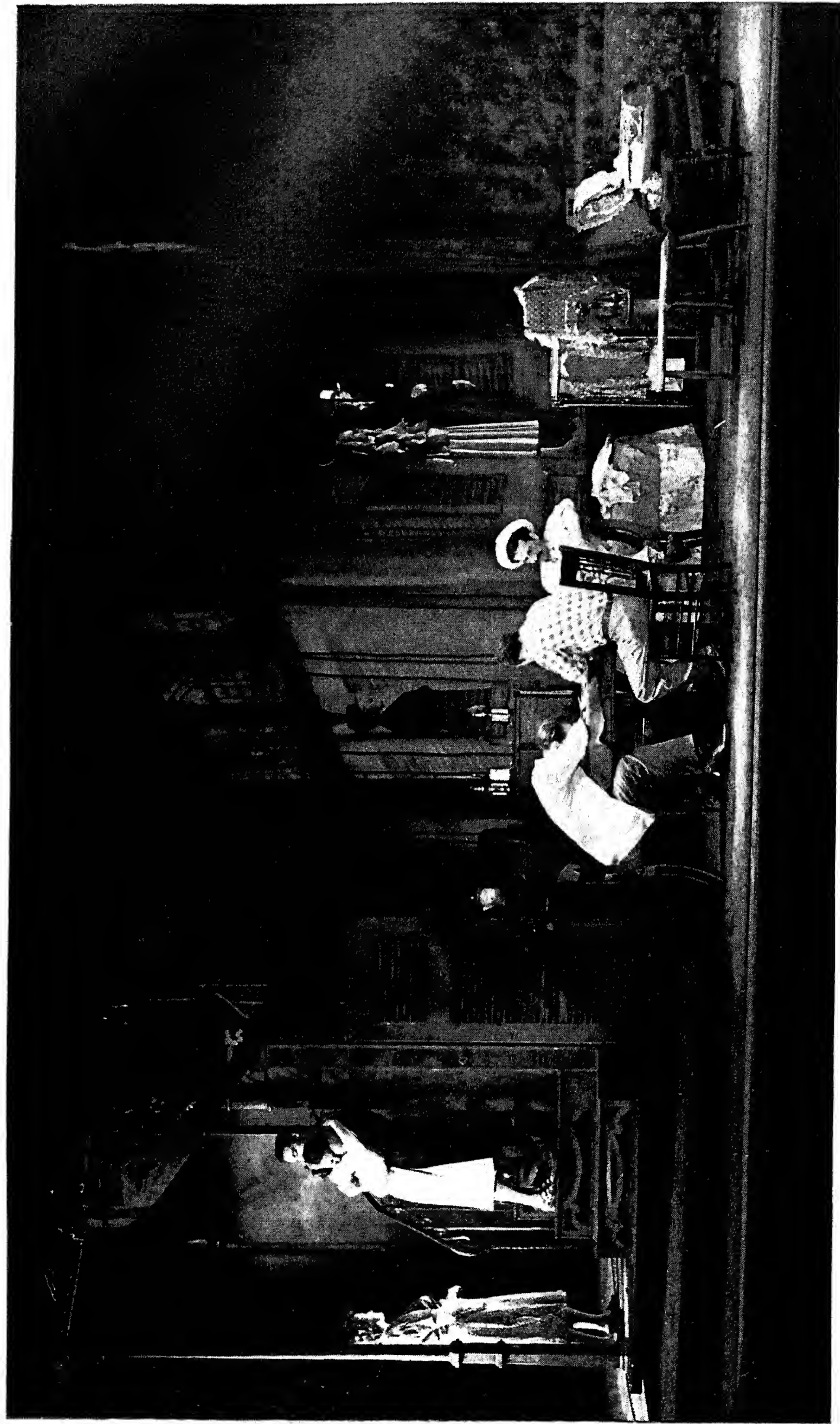
THE PLOUGH AND THE STARS, Act IV. *Nora*: "What place is this? Where am I?" (Cf. p. 757). The Irish Players: Shelah Richards, Sara Allgood, Arthur Sinclair, Sydney Morgan, J. A. O'Rourke. (Photo by White)



THE INFERNAL MACHINE, ACT II. *The Sphynx*: "What brings you back here?"
Oedipus: "The collecting of my due." (Cf. p. 909.) From the production by Louis
Jouvet at the Athénée, Paris. (Photo by Lipnitzki, Paris)



MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL, PART II. Archbishop Becket and the four Knights.
(Photo by Fisk-Moore)



A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE, SCENE ELEVEN. *Steve*: "This game is seven-card stud." (Cf. p. 952.) Kim Hunter as Stella, Marlon Brando as Stanley, and Jessica Tandy as Blanche. (Photographer, Eileen Derby, Graphic House, Inc.)

have left some flaws in her education. Friends, the daughter of Count Mancini, Countess Veronica, can barely read! Is that admissible? And you, Briquet, heartless brute, you still ask why I need money!

Zinida. Artful!

Briquet. What are you teaching her?

Mancini. Everything. A student had been giving her lessons, but I threw him out yesterday. He had the nerve to fall in love with Consuelo and stood there miaowing at the door like a cat. Everything, Briquet, that you don't know—literature, mythology, orthography—

[Two young actresses appear, with small fur coats thrown over their light dresses. They are tired and sit down in the corner.]

Mancini. I do not wish my daughter—

Zinida. Artful!

Briquet. You are stupid, Mancini. What do you do it for? *[In a didactic tone]* You are fearfully stupid, Mancini. Why does she need to learn? Since she is here she need never know anything about that life. Don't you understand? What is geography? If I were the government I would forbid artists to read books. Let them read the posters, that's enough.

[During BRIQUET'S speech, the two clowns and another actor enter. They sit down wearily.]

Briquet. Right now, your Consuelo is an excellent artist, but just as soon as you teach her mythology, and she begins to read, she'll become a nuisance, she'll be corrupted, and then she'll go and poison herself. I know those books, I've read 'em myself. All they teach is corruption, and how to kill oneself.

First Actress. I love the novels that come out in the newspaper.

Briquet. That shows what a foolish girl you are. You'll be done for in no time. Believe me, my friends, we must forget entirely what is happening out there. How can we understand all that goes on there?

Mancini. You are an enemy of enlightenment, you are an obscurantist, Briquet.

Briquet. And you are stupid. You are from out there. What has it taught you? *[The actors laugh.]* If you'd been born in a circus as I was, you'd know something. Enlightenment is plain nonsense—nothing else. Ask Zinida. She knows everything

they teach out there—geography, mythology—Does it make her any happier? You tell them, dear.

Zinida. Leave me alone, Louis.

Mancini [angrily]. Oh! Go to the devil! When I listen to your asinine philosophy, I'd like to skin you for more than a paltry hundred francs—for two hundred—for a thousand. Great God! What an ass of a manager! Yes, right before every one of them I want to say that you are a stingy old skinflint—that you pay starvation wages. I'll make you give Consuelo a raise of a hundred francs. Listen, all you honest vagabonds, tell me—who is it draws the crowd that fills the circus every night? You? a couple of musical donkeys? Tigers, lions? Nobody cares for those hungry cats!

Zinida. Leave the tigers alone.

Mancini. Beg your pardon, Zinida. I did not mean to hurt your feelings—honestly. I really marvel at your furious audacity—at your grace—you are a heroine—I kiss your tiny hands. But what do they understand about heroism? *[An orchestra softly plays the Tango in the circus. He continues with enthusiasm.]* Hear! hear! Now tell me, honest vagabonds, who but Consuelo and Bezano draws the crowds! That Tango on horseback—it is—it is—Oh, the devil! Even his fatuousness the Pope could not withstand its lure.

Polly. True! It's a great trick—wasn't the idea Bezano's?

Mancini. Idea! Idea! The lad's in love, like a cat—that's the idea. What's the good of an idea without a woman! You wouldn't dance very far with your idea alone, eh, Papa Briquet?

Briquet. We have a contract.

Mancini. Such base formalities.

Zinida. Give him ten francs and let him go.

Mancini. Ten! Never! Fifteen! Don't be stubborn, Papa. For the traditions of my house—twenty. I swear—on my honour—I can't do with less. *[BRIQUET hands him twenty francs. Nonchalantly.]* Merci. Thanks.

Zinida. Why don't you take it from your baron?

Mancini [raising his eyebrows haughtily, quite indignant]. From the Baron?

Woman! who do you think I am that I should be beholden to a stranger?

Zinida. You're plotting something artful. I know you very little, but I guess you're an awful scoundrel.

Mancini [laughs]. Such an insult from such beautiful lips.

[Enter an "artist," apparently an athlete.]

Athlete. Papa Briquet, there's a gentleman from beyond the grave asking for you.

Actress. A ghost?

Athlete. No. He seems alive. Did you ever see a drunken ghost?

Briquet. If he's drunk, tell him I'm out, Thomas. Does he want to see me or the Count?

Athlete. No, you. Maybe he's not drunk, but just a ghost.

Mancini [draws himself together, puffs up]. A society man?

Athlete. Yes. I'll tell him to come in.

[One hears the whip cracking in ring. The Tango sounds very low and distant—then comes nearer—louder. Silence.]

Briquet [touching ZINIDA's arm]. Tired?

Zinida [drawing back a little]. No.

Polly. Your red lion is nervous to-day, Zinida!

Zinida. You shouldn't tease him.

Polly. I played a melody from Traviata for him. And he sang with me. Wouldn't that be a good trick to stage, Papa Briquet?

[THOMAS brings in the gentleman, points out the manager, and goes heavily away. The gentleman is not young, and he is ugly, but his rather strange face is bold and lively. He wears an expensive overcoat, with a fur collar, and holds his hat and gloves in his hand.]

The Gentleman [bowing and smiling]. Have I the pleasure of addressing the manager?

Briquet. Yes. Won't you sit down, please? Tilly, bring a chair.

Gentleman. Oh! Don't trouble. [Looks around.] These are your artists? Very glad—

Mancini [straightening and bowing slightly]. Count Mancini.

Gentleman [surprised]. Count?

Briquet [indefinitely]. Yes, Count. And whom have I the honour of—

Gentleman. I don't quite know myself—yet. As a rule you chose your own names, don't you? I have not chosen yet. Later you might advise me about it. I have an idea already, but I am afraid it sounds too much like literature—you know.

Briquet. Literature?

Gentleman. Yes! Too sophisticated. [They all look surprised.] I presume these two gentlemen are clowns? I am so glad. May I shake hands with them? [Stands up and shakes hands with clowns, who make silly faces.]

Briquet. Excuse me—but what can I do for you?

Gentleman [with the same pleasant, confident smile]. Oh. You do something for me? No. I want to do something for you, Papa Briquet.

Briquet. Papa Briquet? But you don't look like . . .

Gentleman [reassuringly]. It's all right. I shall become "like." These two gentlemen just made remarkable faces. Would you like to see me imitate them? Look! [He makes the same silly faces as the clowns.]

Briquet. Yes! [Involuntarily.] You are not drunk, sir?

Gentleman. No. I don't drink as a rule. Do I look drunk?

Polly. A little.

Gentleman. No—I don't drink. It is a peculiarity of my talent.

Briquet [familiarily]. Where did you work before? Juggler?

Gentleman. No. But I am glad you feel in me a comrade, Papa Briquet. Unfortunately I am not a juggler, and have worked nowhere—I am—just so.

Mancini. But you look like a society man.

Gentleman. Oh, you flatter me, Count. I am just so.

Briquet. Well, what do you want? You see I am obliged to tell you that everything is taken.

Gentleman. That's immaterial. I want to be a clown, if you will allow me. [Some of the actors smile, BRIQUET begins to grow angry.]

Briquet. But what can you do? You're asking too much. What can you do?

Gentleman. Why! Nothing! Isn't that funny! I can't do a thing.

Briquet. No, it's not funny. Any scoundrel knows that much.

Gentleman [rather helpless, but still smiling and looking around]. We can invent something—

Briquet [ironically]. From literature?

[The clown JACKSON enters slowly without being noticed by the others. He stands behind the gentlemen.]

Gentleman. Yes, one can find something literary, too. A nice little speech for instance on, let's say, a religious topic. Something like a debate among the clowns.

Briquet. A debate! The devil! This is no academy.

Gentleman [sadly]. I am very sorry. Something else then. Perhaps a joke about the creation of the world and its rulers?

Briquet. What about the police? No, no—nothing like that!

Jackson [coming forward]. The rulers of the world? You don't like them? I don't either. Shake.

Briquet [introducing]. Our chief clown, the famous Jackson.

Gentleman [enthusiastically]. Great heavens—you! Allow me to shake hands with you heartily! You, with your genius, you have given me so much joy!

Jackson. I'm glad indeed!

Briquet [shrugs his shoulders; to JACKSON.] He wants to be a clown! Look him over, Jim.

[JACKSON makes a motion at which the gentleman hurriedly removes his coat and throws it on a chair. He is ready for the examination. JACKSON turns him round, looking him over critically.]

Jackson. Clown? Hm! Turn round then. Clown? Yes? Now smile. Wider—broader—do you call that a smile? So—that's better. There is something, yes—but for full development—[Sadly.] Probably you can't even turn a somersault?

Gentleman [sighs]. No.

Jackson. How old are you?

Gentleman. Thirty-nine. Too late?

[JACKSON moves away with a whistle. There is a silence.]

Zinida [softly]. Take him.

Briquet [indignant]. What the hell shall I do with him if he doesn't know a thing? He's drunk!

Gentleman. Honestly, I am not. Thank you for your support, Madame. Are you not the famous Zinida, the lion tamer, whose regal beauty and audacity—

Zinida. Yes. But I do not like flattery.

Gentleman. It is not flattery.

Mancini. You are evidently not accustomed to good society, my dear. Flattery? This gentleman expresses his admiration in sincere and beautiful words—and you—you are not educated, Zinida. As for myself—

[Enter CONSUELO and BEZANO in circus costume.]

Consuelo. You here, Daddy?

Mancini. Yes, my child, you are not tired? [Kisses her on the forehead.] My daughter, sir, Countess Veronica. Known on the stage as Consuelo, The Bareback Tango Queen. Did you ever see her?

Gentleman. I have enjoyed her work. It is marvellous!

Mancini. Yes! Of course. Everyone admits it. And how do you like the name, Consuelo? I took it from the novel of George Sand. It means "Consolation."

Gentleman. What a wonderful knowledge of books!

Mancini. A small thing. Despite your strange intention, I can see, sir, that you are a gentleman. My peer! Let me explain to you, that only the strange and fatal misfortunes of our ancient family—"sic transit gloria mundi," sir—

Consuelo. It's a bore, Daddy—Where's my handkerchief, Alfred?

Bezano. Here it is.

Consuelo [showing the handkerchief to the gentleman]. Genuine Venetian. Do you like it?

Gentleman [again bowing]. My eyes are dazzled! How beautiful! Papa Briquet, the more I look round me the more I want to stay with you. [Makes the face of a simpleton.] On the one hand a count, on the other—Jackson [nods approval]. That's not bad. Look here, think a bit—

find something. Everyone here thinks for himself.

[*Silence. The gentleman stands with a finger on his forehead, thinking.*]

Gentleman. Find something—find something . . . Eureka!

Polly. That means found. Come!

Gentleman. Eureka—I shall be among you, he who gets slapped.

[*General laughter. Even BRIQUET smiles.*]

Gentleman [*looks at them smiling*]. You see I made even you laugh—is that easy? [*All grow serious. POLLY sighs.*]

Tilly. No, it's not easy. Did you laugh, Polly?

Polly. Sure, a lot. Did you?

Tilly. I did. [*Imitating an instrument, he plays with his lips a melody at once sad and gay.*]

Jackson. "He Who Gets Slapped," that's not bad.

Gentleman. It's not, is it? I rather like it myself. It suits my talent. And comrades, I have even found a name—you'll call me "HE." Is that all right?

Jackson [*thinking*]. "HE"—Not bad.

Consuelo [*in a singing, melodic voice*]. "HE" is so funny—"HE"—like a dog. Daddy, are there such dogs?

[*JACKSON suddenly gives a circus slap to the gentleman. HE steps back and grows pale.*]

Gentleman. What!—[*General laughter covers his exclamation.*]

Jackson. HE, Who Gets Slapped. Or didn't you get it?

Polly [*comically*]. He says he wants more—

[*The gentleman smiles, rubbing his cheek.*]

Gentleman. So sudden—Without waiting—How funny—you didn't hurt me, and yet my cheek burns.

[*Again there is loud laughter. The clowns cackle like ducks, hens, cocks; they bark. ZINIDA says something to BRIQUET, casts a glance toward BEZANO, and goes out. MANCINI assumes a bored air and looks at his watch. The two actresses go out.*]

Jackson. Take him, Papa Briquet—he will push us.

Mancini [*again looking at his watch*]. But bear in mind, that Papa Briquet is as close as Harpagon. If you expect to get good money here you are mistaken. [*HE laughs.*] A slap? What's a slap? Worth only small change, a franc and a half a dozen. Better go back to society; you will make more money there. Why for one slap, just a light tap, you might say, my friend, Marquis Justi, was paid fifty thousand lire!

Briquet. Shut up, Mancini. Will you take care of him, Jackson?

Jackson. I can.

Polly. Do you like music? A Beethoven sonata played on a broom, for instance, or Mozart on a bottle?

He. Alas! No. But I will be exceedingly grateful if you will teach me. A clown! My childhood's dream. When all my school friends were thrilled by Plutarch's heroes, or the light of science—I dreamed of clowns. Beethoven on a broom, Mozart on bottles! Just what I have sought all my life! Friends, I must have a costume!

Jackson. I see you don't know much! A costume [*putting his finger on his forehead*] is a thing which calls for long deep thought. Have you seen my Sun here? [*Strikes his posterior.*] I looked for it two years.

He [*enthusiastically*]. I shall think!

Mancini. It is time for me to go. Consuelo, my child, you must get dressed. [*To HE.*] We are lunching with Baron Regnard, a friend of mine, a banker.

Consuelo. But I don't want to go, Daddy. Alfred says I must rehearse to-day.

Mancini [*horried, holding up his hands*]. Child, think of me, and what a situation you put me in! I promised the Baron, the Baron expects us. Why, it is impossible! Oh, I am in a cold sweat.

Consuelo. Alfred says—

Bezano [*drily*]. She has to work. Are you rested? Then come on.

Mancini. But—the devil take me if I know what to make of it. Hey, Bezano, bareback rider! Are you crazy? I gave you permission for Art's sake, to exercise my daughter's talent—and you—

Consuelo. Go along, Papa, and don't be so silly. We've got to work, haven't we?

Have lunch alone with your Baron. And Daddy, you forgot to take a clean handkerchief again, and I washed two for you yesterday. Where did you put them?

Mancini [ashamed, blushing]. Why, my linen is washed by the laundress, and you, Consuelo, are still playing with toys. It is stupid! You're a chatter-box. You don't think. These gentlemen might imagine Heaven knows what. How stupid. I'm off.

Consuelo. Do you want me to write him a little note?

Mancini [angrily]. A little note? Your little notes would make a horse laugh! Good-bye.

[He goes out toying angrily with his cane. The clowns follow him respectfully, playing a funeral march. HE and JACKSON laugh. The actors disappear one by one.]

Consuelo [laughing]. Do I really write so badly? And I love so to write. Did you like my note, Alfred—or did you laugh, too?

Bezano [blushing]. No, I did not. Come on, Consuelo.

[They go, and meet ZINIDA, entering. CONSUELO passes on.]

Zinida. Are you going back to work, Bezano?

Bezano [politely]. Yes. To-day is a very bad day. How are your lions, Zinida? I think the weather affects them.

Consuelo [from the ring]. Alfred!

Zinida. Yes. Some one is calling you. You'd better go. *[ALFRED goes out. To BRIQUET.]* Are you finished?

Briquet. Right away.

Jackson. Then good-bye till evening. Think about your costume, HE, and I shall look for some idea, too. Be here at ten to-morrow. Don't be late, or you'll get another slap. And I'll work with you.

He. I shall not be late. *[HE looks after JACKSON, who goes out.]* Must be a nice man. All the people about you are so nice, Papa Briquet. I suppose that good-looking bareback rider is in love with Consuelo, isn't he? *[Laughs.]*

Zinida. It's none of your business. For a newcomer you go poking your nose too far. How much does he want, Papa?

Briquet. Just a minute. See here, HE.

I don't want to make a contract with you.

He. Just as you please. Do you know what? Don't let us talk about money. You are an honest fellow, Briquet; you will see what my work is worth to you, and then—

Briquet [pleased]. Now that's very nice of you. Zinida, the man really doesn't know anything.

Zinida. Well, do as he suggests. Now we must write it down. Where's the book?

Briquet Here. [To HE.] I don't like to write *[gives book to ZINIDA]*, but we have to put down the names of the actors, you know—it's police regulations. Then if anyone kills himself, or—

[Again comes the sound of the Tango, and calls from the ring.]

Zinida. What is your name?

He [smiling]. HE. I chose it, you know. Or don't you like it?

Briquet. We like it all right—but we have to have your real name. Have you a passport?

He [confused]. A passport? No, I have none. Or, rather, yes. I have something of the kind, but I had no idea the rules were strictly enforced here. What do you need papers for?

[ZINIDA and BRIQUET look at each other. ZINIDA pushes the book aside.]

Zinida. Then we can't take you. We cannot quarrel with the police, just on your account.

Briquet. She is my wife. I hadn't told you. She's right. You might get hurt by a horse, or hurt yourself—or do something. We don't know you, you see. I personally don't care, but out there, it's different, you see. For me a corpse is just a corpse—and I don't ask anything about him. It's up to God or the Devil. But they—they're too curious. Well, I suppose it's necessary for order. I don't know—Got a card?

He [rubs his head, thinking]. What shall I do? I have my card, but *[smiles]* you understand that I don't want my name to be known.

Briquet. Some story, hey?

He. Yes, something like that. Why can't you imagine that I have no name? Can't I lose it as I might lose my hat? Or let some one else take it by mistake? When

a stray dog comes to you, you don't ask his name—you simply give him another. Let me be that dog. [*Laughing.*] HE—the Dog!

ZINIDA. Why don't you tell us your name, just the two of us? Nobody else need know it. Unless you should break your neck—

He [*hesitates*]. Honestly? [*ZINIDA shrugs her shoulders.*]

Briquet. Where people are honest, their word is good. One sees you come from out there.

He. All right. But please, don't be surprised. [*Gives ZINIDA his card. She looks at it, then hands it to BRIQUET, then both look at HE.*]

Briquet. If it is true, sir, that you are really what is written here—

He. For heaven's sake—for heaven's sake—this does not exist, but was lost long ago; it is just a check for an old hat. I pray you to forget it, as I have. I am HE Who Gets Slapped—nothing else. [*Silence.*]

Briquet. I beg your pardon, sir, but I must ask you again, I must humbly ask you—are you not drunk, sir? There is something in your eye—something—

He. No, no. I am HE Who Gets Slapped. Since when do you speak to me like this, Papa Briquet? You offend me.

ZINIDA. After all, it's his business, Briquet. [*She hides the card.*] Truly you are a strange man. [*Smiles.*] And you have already noticed that Bezano is in love with the horse-girl? And that I love my Briquet, did you notice that, too?

He [*also smiling*]. Oh, yes. You adore him.

ZINIDA. I adore him. Now go with him, Briquet, show him the ring and the stables—I have something to write.

He. Yes, yes, please. I am so happy. At last you have taken me, haven't you? It is true—you're not joking. The circus, the tan-bark, the ring in which I shall run getting my slaps. Yes, yes, Briquet, let's go. Until I feel the sawdust under my feet, I shall not believe it.

Briquet. All right then. [*Kisses ZINIDA.*] Come on.

ZINIDA. Just a minute—HE! Answer me a question. I have a man who takes care of the cages, a plain fellow whom nobody knows. He just clears the cages, you

know; he walks in and out whenever he wants to, without even looking at the lions, as if he were perfectly at home. Why is that so? Nobody knows him, everybody knows me, everyone is afraid for me, while—And he is such a silly man—you will see him. [*Laughs.*] But don't you think of entering the cage yourself! My red one would give you such a slap!

Briquet [*displeased*]. There you are again ZINIDA—stop it.

ZINIDA [*laughs*]. All right—go. Oh yes, Louis, send me Bezano. I have to settle an account with him.

[*HE and the director go out.*]

ZINIDA looks at the card once more, then hides it. She gets up and walks quickly up and down the room. She stops to listen to the Tango, which ends abruptly. Then she stands motionless, looking straight at the dark opening of the door through which BEZANO comes.]

Bezano [*entering*]. You called me, ZINIDA? What do you want? Tell me quickly, I have no time—

[*ZINIDA looks at him silently. BEZANO flushes with anger, and knits his eyebrows. He turns to the door to go.*]

ZINIDA. Bezano!

Bezano [*stops, without looking up*]. What do you want? I have no time.

ZINIDA. Bezano! I keep hearing people say that you are in love with Consuelo. Is it true?

Bezano [*shrugging his shoulders*]. We work well together.

ZINIDA [*takes a step forward*]. No—Tell me, Alfred, do you love her?

Bezano [*flushes like a boy, but looks straight into ZINIDA'S eyes. Proudly*]. I do not love anybody. No, I love nobody. How can I? Consuelo? She is here to-day, gone to-morrow, if her father should take her away. And I? Who am I? An acrobat, the son of a Milanese shoemaker—She! I cannot even talk about it. Like my horses I have no words. Who am I to love?

ZINIDA. Do you love me? A little?

Bezano. No. I told you before.

ZINIDA. Still no? Not even a little?

Bezano [after a silence]. I am afraid of you.

Zinida [wants to cry out, indignantly, but masters herself and lowers her eyes, as if in an effort to shut out their light; turns pale]. Am I . . . so terrifying a woman—

Bezano. You are beautiful, like a queen. You are almost as beautiful as Consuelo. But I don't like your eyes. Your eyes command me to love you—and I don't like to be commanded. I am afraid of you.

Zinida. Do I command, Bezano? No—only implore.

Bezano. Then why not look at me straight? Now I have it. You know yourself that your eyes cannot implore. [Laughs.] Your lions have spoiled you.

Zinida. My red lion loves me—

Bezano. Never! If he loves you, why is he so sad?

Zinida. Yesterday he was licking my hands like a dog.

Bezano. And this morning he was looking for you to devour you. He thrusts out his muzzle and looks out, as if he sees only you. He is afraid of you, and he hates you. Or do you want me to lick your hands too, like a dog?

Zinida. No, Alfred, but I—I want to kiss your hand. [With passion.] Give it to me!

Bezano [severely]. I am ashamed to listen to you when you speak like that.

Zinida [controlling herself]. One should not torture another as you torture me. Alfred, I love you. No, I do not command. Look into my eyes—I love you. [Silence.]

Bezano [turns to go]. Good-bye.

Zinida. Alfred—

[He appears in the doorway, and stops.]

Bezano. Please never tell me any more that you love. I don't want it. Otherwise I will quit. You pronounce the word as if you were cracking me with your whip. You know it is disgusting—

[He turns brusquely and goes. Both notice HE; BEZANO, frowning, passes out quickly. ZINIDA returns to her place at the desk, with a proudly indifferent expression.]

He [coming in]. I beg your pardon, but I—

Zinida. There you are again, poking

your nose into everything, HE. Do you really want a slap?

He [laughing]. No. I simply forgot my overcoat. I didn't hear anything.

Zinida. I don't care whether you did or not.

He. May I take my coat?

Zinida. Take it if it's yours. Sit down, HE.

He. I am sitting down.

Zinida. Now tell me, HE, could you love me?

He [laughing]. I? I and Love! Look at me, Zinida. Did you ever see a lover with such a face?

Zinida. One can succeed with such a face—

He. That's because I am happy—because I lost my hat—because I am drunk—or perhaps I am not drunk. But I feel as dizzy as a young girl at her first ball. It is so nice here—slap me, I want to play my part. Perhaps it will awaken love in my heart, too. Love—[as if listening to his own heart with pretended terror] do you know—I feel it!

[In the circus the Tango is played again.]

Zinida [listening too]. For me?

He. No. I don't know. For everyone. [Listens to the music.] Yes, they are dancing—how beautiful Consuelo is—and how beautiful is the youth. He has the body of a Greek God; he looks as if he had been modeled by Praxiteles. Love! Love! [Silence, music.]

Zinida. Tell me, HE—

He. At your service, Queen!

Zinida. HE, what shall I do, to make my lions love me?

ACT TWO

The same room, during the evening performance. Occasional music, laughter, shrieks, and applause are audible. Through the small windows, back centre, the light is shining.

CONSUELO and BARON REGNARD occupy the stage; CONSUELO wears her stage costume; she sits with her feet on the sofa, a small shawl covering her shoulders. Before her stands the BARON, a tall stout man in evening dress, a rose in his buttonhole; grasping the ground with feet well apart,

he gazes at her with convex spider-like eyes.

Baron. Is it true that your father, the Count, has introduced you to a certain Marquis Justi, a very rich man?

Consuelo [surprised]. No, he is only joking. I have often heard him speak of a Marquis Justi but I have never seen him

Baron. And do you know that your father is just a charlatan?

Consuelo. Oh! Don't say that—Father is such a dear.

Baron. Did you like the jewels?

Consuelo. Yes, very much. I was very sorry when Father told me I must return them. He said it would not be nice for me to keep them. I even cried a little about it.

Baron. Your father is only a beggar and a charlatan.

Consuelo. Oh, no, don't scold him—he loves you so much.

Baron. Let me kiss your hand—

Consuelo. Oh, no, it isn't proper! One may kiss the hand only when one says how do you do or good-bye. But in the meantime you can't.

Baron. Everybody is in love with you, that is why you and your father make such a fuss about yourselves. Who is that new clown they call He? I don't like him, he's too shrewd a beast. . . . Is he in love with you, too? I noticed the way he looked at you. . . .

Consuelo [laughing]. Nothing of the kind. He is so funny! He got fifty-two slaps yesterday. We counted them. Think of it, fifty-two slaps! Father said, "if they had only been gold pieces."

Baron. And Bezano, Consuelo. . . . Do you like him?

Consuelo. Yes, very much. He is so good-looking. He says that Bezano and I are the most beautiful couple in the world. He calls him Adam, and me Eve. But that's improper, isn't it? He is so improper.

Baron. And does He speak to you very often?

Consuelo. Yes, often. . . . But I don't understand him. It seems as if he were drunk.

Baron. "Consuelo"! . . . It means in

Spanish . . . Consolation. Your father is an ass. . . . Consuelo, I love you.

Consuelo. Talk it over with Father.

Baron [angry]. Your father is a swindler and a charlatan. He should be turned over to the police. Don't you understand that I cannot marry you?

Consuelo. But Father says you can. . . .

Baron. No, I cannot. And what if I shoot myself? Consuelo, silly girl, I love you unbearably . . . unbearably, do you understand? I am probably mad . . . and must be taken to a doctor, yanked about, beaten with sticks. Why do I love you so much, Consuelo?

Consuelo. Then, you'd better marry.

Baron. I have had a hundred women, beauties, but I didn't see them. You are the first and I don't see any one else. Who strikes man with love, God or the Devil? The Devil struck me. Let me kiss your hand.

Consuelo. No. [She thinks a while and sighs.]

Baron. Do you think sometimes? What are you thinking about now, Consuelo?

Consuelo [with another sigh]. I don't know why, I just felt sorry for Bezano [sighs again]: He is so nice to me when he teaches me . . . and he has such a tiny little room.

Baron [indignant]. You were there?

Consuelo. No. He told me about it. [Smiling.] Do you hear the noise in there? That's He getting slapped. Poor thing . . . although I know it doesn't hurt, it's only make-believe. The intermission is coming soon.

[The BARON throws away his cigar, takes two quick steps forward, and falls on his knees before the girl.]

Baron. Consuelo—

Consuelo. Please, don't. Get up. Please leave my hand alone.

Baron. Consuelo!

Consuelo [disgusted]. Get up please, it's disgusting—you're so fat.

[The BARON gets up. Voices are heard near the door and in the ring. It is the intermission. The clowns come first, talking cheerfully and excitedly. He leads them, in his clown's dress, with painted eyebrows and white nose;

the others are applauding him. Voices of the actors, calling: "Bravo! He." Then come the actors and actresses, riding-masters, and the rest, all in costume. ZINIDA is not among them. PAPA BRIQUET comes a little later.]

Polly. A hundred slaps! Bravo, He!

Jackson. Not bad, not bad at all. You'll make a career.

Tilly. He was the Professor to-day, and we were the students. Here goes another!

[Gives him a clown's slap. Laughter. All bid good evening to the BARON. He is politely rude to these vagabonds who bore him, and remains silent. They seem quite used to it. Enter MANCINI. He is the same, and with the same cane.]

Mancini [shaking hands]. What a success, Baron—and think of it—how the crowd does love slaps. [Whispering.] Your knees are dusty, Baron, brush them off. The floor is very dirty in here. [Aloud.] Consuelo, dear child, how do you feel? [Goes over to his daughter. Sound of laughing, chattering. The waiters from the buffet in the lobby bring in soda and wine. CONSUELO'S voice is heard.]

Consuelo. And where is Bezano?

He [bows before the baron, affecting intimacy]. You do not recognize me, Baron?

Baron. Yes I do. You are the clown, He.

He. Yes I am He Who Gets Slapped. May I presume to ask you, Baron, did you get your jewels back?

Baron. What!

He. I was asked to return some jewels to you, and I take the liberty of —

[The BARON turns his back on him — He laughs loudly.]

Jackson. Whiskey and soda! Believe me, ladies and gents, He will surely make a career. I am an old clown, and I know the crowd. Why to-day, he even eclipsed me—and clouds have covered my Sun. [Striking it.] They do not like puzzles, they want slaps! They are longing for them and dreaming about them in their homes. Your health, He! Another whiskey and soda! He got so many slaps to-day, there would be enough to go round the whole orchestra!

Tilly. I bet there wouldn't! [To JACKSON.] Shake!

Polly. I bet there wouldn't—I'll go and count the old mugs.

A Voice. The orchestra did not laugh —

Jackson. Because they were getting it, but the galleries did, because they were looking at the orchestra getting slapped. Your health, He!

He. Yours, Jim! Tell me, why didn't you let me finish my speech—I was just getting a good start.

Jackson [seriously]. My friend, because your speech was a sacrilege. Politics—all right. Manners—as much as you want. But Providence—leave it in peace. And believe me, friend, I shut your mouth in time. Didn't I, Papa Briquet?

Briquet [coming nearer]. Yes. It was too much like literature. This is not an academy. You forget yourself, He.

Tilly. But to shut one's mouth—faugh . . .

Briquet [in a didactic tone]. Whenever one shuts one's mouth, it is always high time to shut it, unless one is drinking. Hey, whiskey and soda!

Voices. Whiskey and soda for the Manager!

Mancini. But this is obscurantism. Philosophizing again, Briquet?

Briquet. I am not satisfied with you to-day, He. Why do you tease them? They don't like it. Your health! A good slap must be clean like a crystal—ft-ft! Right side, left side, and done with it. They will like it; they will laugh, and love you. But in your slaps there is a certain bite, you understand, a certain smell —

He. But they laughed, nevertheless!

Briquet. But without pleasure, without pleasure, He. You pay, and immediately draw a draft on their bank; it's not the right game—they won't like you.

Jackson. That's what I tell him. He had already begun to make them angry.

Bezano [entering]. Consuelo, where are you? I have been looking for you—come on. [Both go out. The BARON, after hesitating a while, follows them. MANCINI accompanies him respectfully to the door.]

He [sighs]. You don't understand, my dear friends; you are simply old, and have forgotten the smell of the stage.

Jackson. Aha! Who is old, my young man?

He. Don't be angry, Jim. It's a play, don't you understand? I become happy when I enter the ring and hear the music. I wear a mask and I feel humorous. There is a mask on my face, and I play. I may say *anything* like a drunkard. Do you understand? Yesterday when I, with this stupid face, was playing the great man, the philosopher [*he assumes a proud monumental pose, and repeats the gesture of the play—general laughter*], I was walking this way, and was telling how great, how wise, how incomparable I was—how God lived in me, how high I stood above the earth—how glory shone above my head [*his voice changes and he is speaking faster*], then you, Jim, you hit me for the first time. And I asked you "What is it, they're applauding me?" Then, at the tenth slap, I said: "It seems to me that they sent for me from the Academy?" [*Acts, looking around him with an air of unconquerable pride and splendour. Laughter. Jackson gives him a real slap.*]

He [*holding his face*]. Why?

Jackson. Because you're a fool, and play for nothing. Waiter, the check.

[*Laughter. The bell calls them to the ring. The actors go out in haste, some running. The waiters collect their money.*]

Briquet [*in a sing-song*]. To the ring—to the ring—

Mancini. I want to tell you something, *He.* You are not going yet?

He. No. I'll take a rest.

Briquet. To the ring—to the ring—

[*The clowns as they go sing in shrill, squeaky voices. Little by little they all disappear, and loud music begins. He seats himself on the sofa with his legs crossed, and yawns.*]

Mancini. *He,* you have something none of my ancestors ever had—money. Let's have a nice bottle on you. Waiter, please—[*The waiter, who was taking up dishes, brings a bottle of wine and glasses and goes out.*]

He. You're blue, *Mancini.* [*Stretches.*] Well, at my age, a hundred slaps—it seems pretty hard. So you're blue. How are things getting on with your girl?

Mancini. Tss! Bad! Complications—parents—[*shudders*]. Ah—

He. Prison!

Mancini [*laughing*]. Prison! Mustn't I uphold the glory of my name now, eh? *He,* I'm joking—but there is Hell in my heart. You're the only one who understands me. But tell me how to explain this passion. It will turn my hair grey, it'll bring me to prison, to the grave. I am a tragic man, *He*—[*Wipes his eyes with a dirty handkerchief.*] Why don't I like things which are not forbidden? Why, at all moments, even at the very moment of ecstasy, must I be reminded of some law?—it is stupid. *He,* I am becoming an anarchist. Good God—Count *Mancini* an anarchist. That's the only thing I've missed.

He. Isn't there a way of settling it somehow?

Mancini. Is there a way of getting money, somehow?

He. And the Baron?

Mancini. Oh, yes! *He's* just waiting for it, the blood-sucker! He'll get what he's after. Some day, you'll see me give him *Consuelo* for ten thousand francs, perhaps for five!

He. Cheap.

Mancini. Did I say it was anything else? Do I want to do it? But these bourgeois are strangling me, they've got me by the throat. *He,* one can easily see that you're a gentleman, and of good society, you understand me—I showed you the jewels which I sent back to him—damn honesty—I didn't even dare change the stones, put false ones—

He. Why?

Mancini. It would have queered the game. Do you think he didn't weigh the diamonds when he got them back?

He. He will not marry her.

Mancini. Yes he will. You don't understand. [*Laughs.*] The first half of his life, this man had only appetites—now love's got him. If he does not get *Consuelo*, he is lost, he is—like a withered narcissus. Plague take him with his automobiles. Did you see his car?

He. I did. . . . Give *Consuelo* to the Jockey—

Mancini. To *Bezano*? [*Laughs.*] What nonsense you do talk! Oh, I know. It's

your joke about Adam and Eve. But please stop it. It's clever, but it compromises the child. She told me about it.

He. Or give her to me.

Mancini. Have you a billion? [*Laughs.*] Ah, He, I'm not in the proper mood to listen to your clownish jokes— They say there are terrible jails in this country, and no discriminations are being made between people of my kind, and plain scoundrels. Why do you look at me like that? You're making fun of me?

He. No.

Mancini. I'll never get accustomed to those faces. You're so disgustingly made up.

He. He will not marry her. You can be as proud as you please, Mancini, but he'll not marry her. What is Consuelo? She is not educated. When she is off her horse, any good housemaid from a decent house has nicer manners, and speaks better. [*Nonchalantly.*] Don't you think she's stupid?

Mancini. No, she's not stupid. And you, He, are a fool. What need has a woman of intelligence? Why, He, you astonish me. Consuelo is an unpolished jewel, and only a real donkey does not notice her sparkle. Do you know what happened? I tried to begin to polish her—

He. Yes, you took a teacher. And what happened?

Mancini [*nodding his head*]. I was frightened—it went too fast—I had to dismiss him. Another month or two, and she would have kicked me out. [*Laughs.*] The clever old diamond merchants of Amsterdam keep their precious stones unpolished, and fool the thieves. My father taught me that.

He. The sleep of a diamond. It is only sleeping, then. You are wise, Mancini.

Mancini. Do you know what blood flows in the veins of an Italian woman? The blood of Hannibal and Corsini—of a Borgia—and of a dirty Lombardi peasant—and of a Moor. Oh! an Italian woman is not of a lower race, with only peasants and gypsies behind her. All possibilities, all forms are included in her, as in our marvelous sculpture. Do you understand that, you fool? Strike here—out springs a washerwoman, or a cheap street girl whom you want to throw out, because she is sloppy and has a screechy voice. Strike there—

but carefully and gently, for there stands a queen, a goddess, the Venus of the Capitol, who sings like a Stradivarius and makes you cry, idiot! An Italian woman—

He. You're quite a poet, Mancini! But what will the Baron make of her?

Mancini. What? What? Make of her? A baroness, you fool! What are you laughing at? I don't get you? But I am happy that this lovesick beast is neither a duke nor a prince—or she would be a princess and I—what would become of me? A year after the wedding they would not let me even into the kitchen [*laughing*] not even into the kitchen! I, Count Mancini, and she a—a simple—

He [*jumping up*]. What did you say? You are not her father, Mancini?

Mancini. Tss—the devil—I am so nervous to-day! Heavens, who do you think I am? "Her father?" Of course [*tries to laugh*]; how silly you are—haven't you noticed the family resemblance? Just look, the nose, the eyes—[*Suddenly sighs deeply.*] Ah, He! How unhappy I am! Think of it. Here I am, a gentleman, nearly beaten in my struggle to keep up the honour of my name, of an old house, while there in the parquet—there sits that beast, an elephant with the eyes of a spider . . . and he looks at Consuelo . . . and . . .

He. Yes, yes, he has the motionless stare of a spider—you're right!

Mancini. Just what I say—a spider! But I must, I shall compel him to marry her. You'll see—[*Walking excitedly up and down, playing with his cane.*] You'll see! All my life I've been getting ready for this battle. [*He continues to walk up and down. Silence. Outside, great stillness.*]

He [*listening*]. Why is it so quiet out there? What a strange silence.

Mancini [*disgusted*]. I don't know. Out there it is quiet—but here [*touching his forehead with his cane*], here is storm, whirlwind. [*Bends over the clown.*] He, shall I tell you a strange thing—an unusual trick of nature? [*Laughs, and looks very important.*] For three centuries the Counts Mancini have had no children! [*Laughs.*]

He. Then how were you born?

Mancini. Sh! Silence! That is the secret of our sainted mothers! Ha-ha! We are too ancient a stock—too exquisitely refined to trouble ourselves with such things

—matters in which a peasant is more competent than ourselves. [*Enter an usher.*] What do you want? The manager is on the stage.

The Usher [*bows*]. Yes, sir. Baron Regnard wished me to give you this letter.

Mancini. The Baron? Is he there?

The Usher. Baron Regnard has left. There is no answer.

Mancini [*opening the envelope, his hand shaking*]. The devil—the devil!

[*The usher is going.*]

He. Just a minute. Why is there no music? This silence . . .

The Usher. It is the act with Madame Zinida and her lions. [*He goes. Mancini is reading the BARON'S note for the second time.*]

He. What's the matter, Mancini? You shine like Jackson's sun.

Mancini. What's the matter, did you ask? What's the matter? What's the matter? [*Balancing his cane, he takes steps like a ballet-dancer.*]

He. Mancini! [*MANCINI rolls his eyes, makes faces, dances.*] Speak, you beast!

Mancini [*holds out his hand*]. Give me ten francs! Quick—ten francs—here, come on. [*Puts it automatically into his vest pocket.*] Listen, *He*! If in a month I don't have a car of my own, you may give me one of your slaps!

He. What! He's going to marry? He's decided?

Mancini. What do you mean by "decided"? [*Laughs.*] When a man has the rope about his neck, you don't ask him about his health! Baron— [*Stops suddenly, startled. Briquet is staggering in like a drunken man, his hand over his eyes.*]

He [*goes to him, touches his shoulder gently*]. What is the matter, Papa Briquet? Tell me!

Briquet [*groaning*]. Oh, oh, I can't . . . I can't . . . Ah—

He. Something has happened? You are ill? Please speak.

Briquet. I can't look at it! [*Takes his hands from his eyes, opens them wide.*] Why does she do it? Ah, ah, why does she do it? She must be taken away; she is insane. I couldn't look at it. [*Shivers.*]

They will tear her to pieces, *He*—her lions—they will tear her—

Mancini. Go on, Briquet. She is always like that. You act like a child. You ought to be ashamed.

Briquet. No— To-day she is mad! And what is the matter with the crowd? They are all like dead people—they're not even breathing. I couldn't stand it. Listen—what's that? [*All listen. There is the same silence.*]

Mancini [*disturbed*]. I'll go and see.

Briquet [*yelling*]. No! Don't! You can't look—damned profession! Don't go. You will scorch her—every pair of eyes that looks at her—at her lions—no, no. It is impossible—it is a sacrilege. I ran away. . . . *He*, they will tear her—

He [*tries to be cheerful*]. Keep cool, Papa Briquet—I had no idea you were such a coward. You ought to be ashamed. Have a drink. Mancini, give him some wine.

Briquet. I don't want any. Heavens, if it were only over— [*All listen.*] I have seen many things in my life, but this . . . Oh, she is crazy.

[*All still listen. Suddenly the silence breaks, like a huge stone wall crashing. There is a thunder of applause, mixed with shouts, music, wild screams—half bestial, half human. The men give way, relieved. Briquet sinks to a seat.*]

Mancini [*nervous*]. You see—you see—you old fool!

Briquet [*sobs and laughs*]. I am not going to allow it any more!

He. Here she is!

[*ZINIDA walks in, alone. She looks like a drunken bacchante, or like a mad woman. Her hair falls over her shoulders dishevelled, one shoulder is uncovered. She walks unseeing, though her eyes glow. She is like the living statue of a mad Victory. Behind her comes an actor, very pale, then two clowns, and a little later CONSUELO and BEZANO. All look at ZINIDA fearfully, as if they were afraid of a touch of her hand, or her great eyes.*]

Briquet [*shouting*]. You are crazy—you're a mad woman!

Zinida. I? No. Did you see? Did you see? Well? [*She stands smiling, with the expression of a mad Victory.*]

Tilly [*plaintively*]. Cut it out, Zinida. Go to the devil!

Zinida. You saw, too! And! . . . what—

Briquet. Come home—come home. [*To the others.*] You can do what you like here. Zinida, come home.

Polly. You can't go, Papa. There's still your number.

Zinida [*her eyes meet those of BEZANO*]. Ah! Bezano. [*Laughs long and happily.*] Bezano! Alfred! Did you see? My lions do love me! [*BEZANO, without answering, leaves the stage. ZINIDA seems to wither and grow dim, as a light being extinguished. Her smile fades, her eyes and face grow pale, Briquet anxiously bends over her.*]

Briquet [*in a slow voice*]. A chair!

[*ZINIDA sits. Her head drops on her shoulder, her arms fall, she begins to shiver and tremble. Some one calls, "cognac"—an actor runs to get it.*]

Briquet [*helpless*]. What is the matter, Zinida darling?

Mancini [*running about*]. She must quiet down. Get out, get out—vagabonds! I'll fix everything, Papa Briquet. The wrap—where's the wrap? She's cold. [*A clown hands it to him; they cover her.*]

Tilly [*timidly*]. Wouldn't you like some moosic?

Mancini [*giving her some cognac*]. Drink, Duchess, drink! Drink it all—that's it.

[*ZINIDA drinks it like water, evidently not noticing the taste. She shivers. The clowns disappear one by one. CONSUELO, with a sudden flexible movement, falls on her knees before ZINIDA and kisses her hands, warming them between her own.*]

Consuelo. Dear, dear, you are cold! Poor little hands, dear good one, beloved one—

Zinida [*pushes her away, gently*]. Ho—home. It will soon be over. It's nothing . . . I am ver—very . . . home. . . . You stay here, Briquet—you must. I'm all right.

Consuelo. You are cold? Here is my shawl.

Zinida. No—let me. . . [*CONSUELO gets up, and moves aside.*]

Briquet. And it's all because of your books, Zinida—your mythology. Now tell me, why do you want those beasts to love you? Beasts! Do you understand, He? You too, you're from that world. She'll listen more to you. Explain it to her. Whom can those beasts love? Those hairy monsters, with diabolic eyes?

He [*genially*]. I believe—only their equals. You are right, Papa Briquet—they must be the same race.

Briquet. Of course, and this is all nonsense—literature. Explain it to her, He.

He [*takes on a meditative air*]. Yes, you are right, Briquet.

Briquet. You see, dear, silly woman—everybody agrees. . . .

Mancini. Oh! Briquet, you make me sick; you are an absolute despot, an Asiatic.

Zinida [*with the shadow of a smile, gives her hand to be kissed*]. Calm yourself, Louis. It is over—I am going home. [*She stands up, shaking, still chilled.*]

Briquet. But how? alone, dear?

Mancini. What! fool! Did you imagine that Count Mancini would leave a woman when she needed help? I shall take her home—let your brutal heart be at rest—I shall take her home. Thomas, run for an automobile. Don't push me Briquet, you are as awkward as a unicorn . . . that's the way, that's the way—

[*They are holding her, guiding her slowly toward the door. CONSUELO, her chin resting in her hand, is following them with her eyes. Unconsciously she assumes a somewhat affected pose.*]

Mancini. I'll come back for you, child—

[*Only HE and CONSUELO are left on the stage. In the ring, music, shrieks, and laughter begin again.*]

He. Consuelo—

Consuelo. Is that you, HE, dear?

He. Where did you learn that pose? I have seen it only in marble. You look like Psyche.

Consuelo. I don't know, HE. [*She sighs and sits on the sofa, keeping in her pose the same artificiality and beauty.*] It's all so sad here, to-day. HE, are you sorry for Zinida?

He. What did she do?

Consuelo. I didn't see. I had closed my

eyes, and didn't open them. Alfred says she is a wicked woman, but that isn't true. She has such nice eyes, and what tiny cold hands—as if she were dead. What does she do it for? Alfred says she should be audacious, beautiful, but quiet, otherwise what she does is only disgusting. It isn't true, is it, He?

He. She loves Alfred.

Consuelo. Alfred? My Bezano? [*Shrugging her shoulders, and surprised.*] How does she love him? The same as everyone loves?

He. Yes—as everyone loves—or still more.

Consuelo. Bezano? Bezano? No—it's nonsense. [*Pause; silence.*] What a beautiful costume you have, He. You invented it yourself?

He. Jim helped me.

Consuelo. Jim is so nice! All clowns are nice.

He. I am wicked.

Consuelo [*laughs*]. You? You are the nicest of all. Oh, goodness! Three acts more! This is the second on now. Alfred and I are in the third. Are you coming to see me?

He. I always do. How beautiful you are, Consuelo.

Consuelo. Like Eve? [*Smiles.*]

He. Yes, Consuelo. And if the Baron asks you to be his wife, will you accept?

Consuelo. Certainly, He. That's all Father and I are waiting for. Father told me yesterday that the Baron will not hesitate very long. Of course I do not love him. But I will be his honest, faithful wife. Father wants to teach me to play the piano.

He. Are those your own words—"his honest, faithful wife"?

Consuelo. Certainly they are mine. Whose could they be? He loves me so much, the poor thing. Dear He, what does "love" mean? Everybody speaks of love—love—Zinida, too! Poor Zinida! What a boring evening this has been. He, did you paint the laughter on your face yourself?

He. My own self, dear little Consuelo—

Consuelo. How do you do it, all of you? I tried once, but couldn't do a thing. Why are there no women clowns? Why are you so silent, He? You, too, are sad, to-night.

He. No, I am happy to-night. Give me your hand, Consuelo, I want to see what it says.

Consuelo. Do you know how? What a talented man you are! Read it, but don't lie, like a gypsy. [*He goes down on one knee and takes her hand. Both bend over it.*] Am I lucky?

He. Yes, lucky. But wait a minute—this line here—funny. Ah, Consuelo, what does it say, here! [*Acting.*] I tremble, my eyes do not dare to read the strange, fatal signs. Consuelo—

Consuelo. The stars are talking.

He. Yes, the stars are talking. Their voices are distant and terrible; their rays are pale, and their shadows slip by, like the ghosts of dead virgins—their spell is upon thee, Consuelo, beautiful Consuelo. Thou standest at the door of Eternity.

Consuelo. I don't understand. Does it mean that I will live long?

He. This line—how far it goes. Strange! Thou wilt live eternally, Consuelo.

Consuelo. You see, He, you did tell me a lie, just like a gypsy!

He. But it is written—here, silly—and here. Now think of what the stars are saying. Here you have eternal life, love, and glory; and here, listen to what Jupiter says. He says: "Goddess, thou must not belong to any one born on earth," and if you marry the Baron—you'll perish, you'll die, Consuelo. [*Consuelo laughs.*]

Consuelo. Will he eat me?

He. No. But you will die before he has time to eat you.

Consuelo. And what will become of Father? Is there nothing about him here? [*Laughing, she softly sings the melody of the waltz, which is playing in the distance.*]

He. Don't laugh, Consuelo, at the voice of the stars. They are far away, their rays are light and pale, and we can barely see their sleeping shadows, but their sorcery is stern and dark. You stand at the gates of eternity. Your die is cast; you are doomed—and your Alfred, whom you love in your heart, even though your mind is not aware of it, your Alfred cannot save you. He, too, is a stranger on this earth. He is submerged in a deep sleep. He, too, is a little god who has lost himself, and Consuelo, never, never will he find his way to Heaven again. Forget Bezano—

Consuelo. I don't understand a word. Do the gods really exist? My teacher told me about them. But I thought it was all tales! [*Laughs.*] And my Bezano is a god?

He. Forget Bezano! Consuelo, do you know who can save you? The only one who can save you? —I.

Consuelo [*laughing*]. You, HE?

He. Yes, but don't laugh! Look. Here is the letter H. It is I, HE.

Consuelo. HE Who Gets Slapped? Is that written here, too?

He. That, too. The stars know everything. But look here, what more is written about him. Consuelo, welcome him. HE is an old god in disguise, who came down to earth only to love you, foolish little Consuelo.

Consuelo [*laughing and singing*]. Some god!

He. Don't mock! The gods don't like such empty laughter from beautiful lips. The gods grow lonely and die, when they are not recognized. Oh, Consuelo! Oh, great joy and love! Do recognize this god, and accept him. Think a moment, one day a god suddenly went crazy!

Consuelo. Gods go crazy, too?

He. Yes, when they are half man, then they often go mad. Suddenly he saw his own sublimity, and shuddered with horror, with infinite solitude, with superhuman anguish. It is terrible, when anguish touches the divine soul!

Consuelo. I don't like it. What language are you speaking? I don't understand —

He. I speak the language of thy awakening. Consuelo, recognize and accept thy god, who was thrown down from the summit like a stone. Accept the god who fell to the earth in order to live, to play, and to be infinitely drunk with joy. Evoë, Goddess!

Consuelo [*tortured*]. HE—I cannot understand. Let my hand alone.

He [*stands up*]. Sleep. Then wake again, Consuelo! And when thou wakest—remember that hour when, covered with snow-white sea-foam, thou didst emerge from the sky-blue waters. Remember Heaven, and the slow eastern wind, and the whisper of the foam at thy marble feet.

Consuelo [*her eyes are closed*]. I believe—wait—I remember. Remind me further—

[*He is bowed over CONSUELO, with lifted arms; he speaks slowly, but in a commanding voice, as if conjuring.*]

He. You see the waves playing. Remember the song of the sirens, their sorrowless song of joy. Their white bodies, shining blue through the blue waters. Or can you hear the sun, singing? Like the strings of a divine harp, spread the golden rays — Do you not see the hand of God, which gives harmony, light, and love to the world? Do not the mountains, in the blue cloud of incense, sing their hymn of glory? Remember, O Consuelo, remember the prayer of the mountains, the prayer of the sea. [*Silence.*]

He [*commandingly*]. Remember—Consuelo!

Consuelo [*opening her eyes*]. No! HE, I was feeling so happy, and suddenly I forgot it all. Yet something of it all is still in my heart. Help me again, HE, remind me. It hurts, I hear so many voices. They all sing "Consuelo—Consuelo." What comes after? [*Silence; pause.*] What comes after? It hurts. Remind me, HE. [*Silence—in the ring, the music suddenly bursts forth in a tempestuous circus gallop. Silence.*] HE, [*opens her eyes and smiles*] that's Alfred galloping. Do you recognize his music?

He [*with rage*]. Leave the boy alone! [*Suddenly falls on his knees before CONSUELO.*] I love you, Consuelo, revelation of my heart, light of my nights, I love you, Consuelo. [*Looks at her in ecstasy and tears—and gets a slap; starting back.*] What's this?

Consuelo. A slap! You forget who you are. [*Stands up, with anger in her eyes.*] You are HE Who Gets Slapped! Did you forget it? Some god! With such a face—slapped face! Was it with slaps they threw you down from heaven, god?

He. Wait! Don't stand up! I—did not finish the play!

Consuelo [*sits*]. Then you were playing?

He. Wait! One minute.

Consuelo. You lied to me. Why did you play so that I believed you?

He. I am HE Who Gets Slapped!

Consuelo. You are not angry because I struck you? I did not want to really, but

you were so—disgusting. And now you are so funny again. You have great talent, He—or are you drunk?

He. Strike me again.

Consuelo. No.

He. I need it for my play. Strike!

Consuelo [*laughs, and touches his cheek with her fingertips*]. Here, then!

He. Didn't you understand that you are a queen, and I a fool who is in love with his queen? Don't you know, Consuelo, that every queen has a fool, and he is always in love with her, and they always beat him for it. He Who Gets Slapped.

Consuelo. No. I didn't know.

He. Yes, every queen. Beauty has her fool. Wisdom, too. Oh, how many fools she has! Her court is overcrowded with enamoured fools, and the sound of slaps does not cease, even through the night. But I never received such a sweet slap as the one given by my little queen. [*Someone appears at the door. He notices it, and continues to play, making many faces.*] Clown He can have no rival! Who is there who could stand such a deluge of slaps, such a hail-storm of slaps, and not get soaked? [*Feigns to cry aloud.*] "Have pity on me. I am but a poor fool!"

[*Enter two men: an actor, dressed as a bareback rider, and a gentleman from the audience. He is spare, dressed in black, very respectable. He carries his hat in his hand.*]

Consuelo [*laughing, embarrassed*]. He, there is someone here. Stop!

He [*gets up*]. Who is it? Who dares to intrude in the castle of my queen? [*He stops, suddenly. CONSUELO, laughing, jumps up and runs away, after a quick glance at the gentleman.*]

Consuelo. You cheered me up, He. Good-bye. [*At the door.*] You shall get a note to-morrow.

The Bareback Rider [*laughing*]. A jolly fellow, sir. You wanted to see him? There he is. He, the gentleman wants to see you.

He [*in a depressed voice*]. What can I do for you?

[*The actor bows, and goes away, smiling. Both men take a step toward each other.*]

Gentleman. Is this you?

He. Yes! It is I. And you? [*Silence.*]

Gentleman. Must I believe my eyes? Is this you, Mr. —

He [*in a rage*]. My name here is He. I have no other name, do you hear? He Who Gets Slapped. And if you want to stay here, don't forget it.

Gentleman. You are so familiar. As far as I can remember —

He. We are all familiar, here. [*Contemptuously.*] Besides, that's all you deserve, anywhere.

Gentleman [*humbly*]. You have not forgiven me, He? [*Silence.*]

He. Are you here with my wife? Is she too in the circus?

Gentleman [*quickly*]. Oh, no! I am alone. She stayed there!

He. You've left her already?

Gentleman [*humbly*]. No—we have—a son. After your sudden and mysterious disappearance—when you left that strange and insulting letter —

He [*laughs*]. Insulting? You are still able to feel insults? What are you doing here? Were you looking for me, or is it an accident?

Gentleman. I have been looking for you, for half a year—through many countries. And suddenly, to-day—by accident, indeed—I had no acquaintances here, and I went to the circus. We must talk things over . . . He, I implore you. [*Silence.*]

He. Here is a shadow I cannot lose! To talk things over! Do you really think we still have something to talk over? All right. Leave your address with the porter, and I will let you know when you can see me. Now get out. [*Proudly.*] I am busy.

[*The Gentleman bows and leaves.*]

He does not return his bow, but stands with outstretched hand, in the pose of a great man, who shows a boring visitor the door.]

ACT THREE

The same room. Morning, before the rehearsal. He is striding thoughtfully up and down the room. He wears a broad, parti-coloured coat, and a prismatic tie. His derby is on the back of his head, and his face is clean-shaven like that of an actor. His eyebrows are drawn, lips pressed together energetically, his whole appearance severe and sombre. After the entrance of

the GENTLEMAN he changes. His face becomes clown-like, mobile—a living mask.

The GENTLEMAN comes in. He is dressed in black, and has an extremely well-bred appearance. His thin face is yellowish, like an invalid's. When he is upset, his colourless, dull eyes often twitch. He does not notice him.

Gentleman. Good morning, sir.

He [turning around and looking at him absent-mindedly]. Ah! It's you.

Gentleman. I am not late? You look as if you did not expect me. I hope I am not disturbing you? You fixed this time yourself, however, and I took the liberty—

He. No manners, please. What do you want? Tell me quickly, I have no time.

Gentleman [looking around with distaste]. I expected you would invite me to some other place . . . to your home.

He. I have no other home. This is my home.

Gentleman. But people may disturb us here.

He. So much the worse for you. Talk faster! [Silence.]

Gentleman. Will you allow me to sit down?

He. Sit down. Look out! That chair is broken.

[The GENTLEMAN, afraid, pushes away the chair and looks helplessly around. Everything here seems to him dangerous and strange. He chooses an apparently solid little gilded divan, and sits down; puts his silk hat aside, slowly takes off his gloves, which stick to his fingers. He observes him indifferently.]

Gentleman. In this suit, and with this face, you make a still stranger impression. Yesterday it seemed to me that it was all a dream; to-day . . . you . . .

He. You have forgotten my name again? My name is He.

Gentleman. You are determined to continue talking to me like this?

He. Decidedly! But you are squandering your time like a millionaire. Hurry up!

Gentleman. I really don't know . . . Everything here strikes me so . . . These

posters, horses, animals, which I passed when I was looking for you . . . And finally, you, a clown in a circus! [With a slight, deprecating smile.] Could I expect it? It is true, when everybody there decided that you were dead, I was the only man who did not agree with them. I felt that you were still alive. But to find you among such surroundings—I can't understand it.

He. You said you have a son, now. Doesn't he look like me?

Gentleman. I don't understand.

He. Don't you know that widows or divorced women often have children by the new husband, which resemble the old one? This misfortune did not befall you? [Laughs.] And your book, too, is a big success, I hear.

Gentleman. You want to insult me again?

He [laughing]. What a restless, touchy faker you are! Please sit still; be quiet. It is the custom here to speak this way. Why were you trying to find me?

Gentleman. My conscience . . .

He. You have no conscience. Or were you afraid that you hadn't robbed me of everything I possessed, and you came for the rest? But what more could you take from me now? My fool's cap with its bells? You wouldn't take it. It's too big for your bald head! Crawl back, you book-worm!

Gentleman. You cannot forgive the fact that your wife . . .

He. To the devil with my wife! [The GENTLEMAN is startled and raises his eyebrows. He laughs.]

Gentleman. I don't know. . . . But such language! I confess I find difficulty in expressing my thoughts in such an atmosphere, but if you are so . . . indifferent to your wife, who, I shall allow myself to emphasize the fact, loved you and thought you were a saint— [He laughs.] Then what brought you to such a . . . step? Or is it that you cannot forgive me my success? A success, it is true, not entirely deserved. And now you want to take vengeance, with your humbleness, on those who misunderstood you. But you always were so indifferent to glory. Or your indifference was only hypocrisy. And when I, a more lucky rival . . .

He [with a burst of laughter]. Rival!
You—a rival!

Gentleman [growing pale]. But my book!

He. You are talking to me about your book? To me? [The GENTLEMAN is very pale. He looks at him with curiosity and mockery.]

Gentleman [raising his eyes]. I am a very unhappy man.

He. Why?

Gentleman. I am a very unhappy man. You must forgive me. I am deeply, irreparably, and infinitely unhappy.

He. But why? Explain it to me. [Starts walking up and down.] You say yourself that your book is a tremendous success, you are famous, you have glory; there is not a yellow newspaper in which you and your thoughts are not mentioned. Who knows me? Who cares about my heavy abstractions, from which it was difficult for them to derive a single thought? You—you are the great vulgarizer! You have made my thoughts comprehensible even to horses! With the art of a great vulgarizer, a tailor of ideas, you dressed my Apollo in a barber's jacket, you handed my Venus a yellow ticket, and to my bright hero you gave the ears of an ass. And then your career is made, as Jackson says. And wherever I go, the whole street looks at me with thousands of faces, in which—what mockery—I recognize the traits of my own children. Oh! How ugly your son must be, if he resembles me! Why then are you unhappy, you poor devil? [The GENTLEMAN bows his head, plucking at his gloves.] The police haven't caught you, as yet. What am I talking about? Is it possible to catch you? You always keep within the limits of the law. You have been torturing yourself up to now because you are not married to my wife. A notary public is always present at your thefts. What is the use of this self-torture, my friend? Get married. I died. You are not satisfied with having taken only my wife? Let my glory remain in your possession. It is yours. Accept my ideas. Assume all the rights, my most lawful heir! I died! And when I was dying [making a stupidly pious face] I forgave thee! [Bursts out laughing. The GENTLEMAN raises his head, and bending forward, looks straight into HE's eyes.]

Gentleman. And my pride?

He. Have you any pride? [The GENTLEMAN straightens up, and nods his head, silently.] Yes! But please stand off a little. I don't like to look at you. Think of it. There was a time when I loved you a little, even thought you a little gifted! You—my empty shadow.

Gentleman [nodding his head]. I am your shadow. [He keeps on walking, and looks over his shoulder at the GENTLEMAN, with a smile.]

He. Oh, you are marvellous! What a comedy! What a touching comedy! Listen. Tell me frankly if you can; do you hate me very much?

Gentleman. Yes! With all the hate there is in the world! Sit down here.

He. You order me?

Gentleman. Sit down here. Thank you. [Bows.] I am respected and I am famous, yes? I have a wife and a son, yes? [Laughs slowly.] My wife still loves you: our favourite discussion is about your genius. She supposes you are a genius. We, I and she, love you even when we are in bed. Tss! It is I who must make faces. My son—yes, he'll resemble you. And when, in order to have a little rest, I go to my desk, to my ink-pot, my books—there, too, I find you. Always you! Everywhere you! And I am never alone—never myself and alone. And when at night—you, sir, should understand this—when at night I go to my lonely thoughts, to my sleepless contemplations, even then I find your image in my head, in my unfortunate brain, your damned and hateful image! [Silence. The GENTLEMAN's eyes twitch.]

He [speaking slowly]. What a comedy. How marvellously everything is turned about in this world: the robbed proves to be robber, and the robber is complaining of theft, and cursing! [Laughs.] Listen, I was mistaken. You are not my shadow. You are the crowd. If you live by my creations, you hate me; if you breathe my breath, you are choking with anger. And choking with anger, hating me, you still walk slowly on the trail of my ideas. But you are advancing backward, advancing backward, comrade. Oh, what a marvellous comedy! [Walking and smiling.] Tell me, would you be relieved if I really had died?

Gentleman. Yes! I think so. Death augments distance and dulls the memory. Death reconciles. But you do not look like a man who—

He. Yes, yes! Death, certainly!

Gentleman. Sit down here.

He. Your obedient servant. Yes?

Gentleman. Certainly, I do not dare to ask you—[*makes a grimace*] to ask you to die, but tell me: you'll never come back there? No, don't laugh. If you want me to, I'll kiss your hand. Don't grimace! I would have done so if you had died.

He [slowly]. Get out, vermin!

[*Enter TILLY and POLLY as in the first act, playing. For a long time they do not see the two men.*]

He. Jack!

Tilly. Ah! Good morning, *He*. We are rehearsing. You know it is very hard. Jack has just about as much music in his head as my pig.

He [introducing, nonchalantly]. My friend . . . For the benefit performance?

[*The clowns bow to the GENTLEMAN, making idiotic faces.*]

Polly. Yes. What are you preparing? You are cunning, *He*! Consuelo told me what you are preparing for the benefit performance. She leaves us soon, you know?

He. Is that so?

Tilly. Zinida told us. Do you think she would get a benefit performance otherwise? She is a nice girl.

Polly [taking his small flute-pipe]. Here! Don't walk as if you were an elephant. Don't forget you are an ant! Come on!

[*They go off, playing.*]

Gentleman [smiling]. These are your new comrades? How strange they are!

He. Everything here is strange.

Gentleman. This suit of yours. Black used to be very becoming to you. This one hurts the eyes.

He [looking himself over]. Why? It looks very nice. The rehearsal has begun. You must go away. You are disturbing us.

Gentleman. You did not answer my question.

[*Slow strains of the Tango from a small orchestra in the ring.*]

He [listening absent-mindedly to the music]. What question?

Gentleman [who does not hear the music]. I pray you tell me: will you ever come back?

He [listening to the music]. Never, never, never!

Gentleman [getting up]. Thank you. I am going.

He. Never, never, never! Yes, run along. And don't come back. There, you were still bearable and useful for something, but here you are superfluous.

Gentleman. But if something should happen to you . . . you are a healthy man, but in this environment, these people . . . how will I know? They don't know your name here?

He. My name here is unknown, but you will know. Anything else?

Gentleman. I can be at peace? On your word of honour? Of course I mean, comparatively, at peace?

He. Yes, you may be comparatively at peace. Never! [*They walk to the door, the GENTLEMAN stops.*]

Gentleman. May I come to the circus? You will allow me?

He. Certainly. You are the audience! [*Laughs.*] But I shan't give you my card for a pass. But why do you want to come? Or do you like the circus so much, and since when?

Gentleman. I want to look at you some more, and to understand, perhaps. Such a transformation! Knowing you as I do, I cannot admit that you are here without any idea. But what idea? [*Looks short-sightedly at He. He grimaces and thumbs his nose.*]

Gentleman. What is that?

He. My idea! Good-bye, Prince! My regards to your respected wife, your Highness' wonderful son!

[*Enter MANCINI.*]

Mancini. You positively live in the circus, *He*. Whenever I come, you are here. You are a fanatic in your work, sir.

He [introducing]. Prince Poniatovsky, Count Mancini.

Mancini [drawing himself up]. Very, very glad. And you too, Prince, you know my queer fellow? What a nice face he has, hasn't he? [*He touches He's shoulder patronizingly, with the tip of his cane.*]

Gentleman [awkwardly]. Yes, I have the pleasure . . . certainly. Good-bye, Count.

Mancini. Good-day, Prince.

He [accompanying him]. Look out, your Highness, for the dark passages! the steps are so rotten. Unfortunately I cannot usher you out to the street.

Gentleman [in a low voice]. You will not give me your hand when we say good-bye? We are parting for ever.

He. Unnecessary, Prince. I shall still hope to meet you in the Kingdom of Heaven. I trust you will be there, too?

Gentleman [with disgust]. How you did succeed! You have so much of the clown in you!

He. I am He Who is Getting Slapped. Good-bye, Prince. [*They take another step.*]

Gentleman [looking He in the eyes; in a very low voice]. Tell me, you are not mad?

He [just as low, his eyes wide open]. I am afraid, I am afraid you are right, Prince. [*Still low.*] Ass! Never in your life did you use such a precise expression. I am mad! [*Playing the clown again, He shows him to the stair, with a big, affected gesture, a sweep of the hand and arm from his head to the floor, the fingers moving, to represent the steps.*]

He [laughing]. He is down! *Au revoir*, Prince. [*The GENTLEMAN goes out. He comes skipping back, and takes a pose.*] Mancini! Let us dance the Tango! Mancini, I adore you!

Mancini [sitting back comfortably and playing with his cane]. Don't forget yourself, He. But you're hiding something, my boy. I always said you used to belong to society. It is so easy to talk to you. And who is this Prince? A genuine one?

He. Genuine. A first rater. Like you!

Mancini. A sympathetic face. Although at first I thought he was an undertaker who came for an order. Ah, He! When shall I finally depart from these dirty walls, from Papa Briquet, stupid posters, and brutal jockeys!

He. Very soon, Mancini.

Mancini. Yes, soon. I am simply exhausted in these surroundings, He! I begin to feel myself a horse. You are from society, still you don't yet know what high society means. To be at last decently dressed, to attend receptions, to display the splendour of wit; from time to time to

have a game of baccarat [*laughing*] without tricks or cheating —

He. And when evening comes, go to a suburb, where you are considered an honest father, who loves his children and —

Mancini. And get hold of something, eh? [*Laughs.*] I shall wear a silk mask and two butlers shall follow me, thus protecting me from the dirty crowd. Ah, He! The blood of my ancestors boils in me. Look at this stiletto. What do you think? Do you think that it was ever stained with blood?

He. You frighten me, Count!

Mancini [laughing, and putting the stiletto back into its sheath]. Fool!

He. And what about the girl?

Mancini. Tss! I give those bourgeois absolute satisfaction, and they glorify my name. [*Laughs.*] The splendour of my name is beginning to shine with a force unknown. By the way, do you know what automobile firms are the best? Money is no object. [*Laughs.*] Ah! Papa Briquet.

[*Enter BRIQUET in his overcoat and silk hat. They shake hands.*]

Briquet. So, Mancini, you have obtained a benefit performance for your daughter, Consuelo! I only want to tell you, that if it were not for Zinida . . .

Mancini. Listen, Briquet. Decidedly you are a donkey. What are you complaining of? The Baron has bought all the parquet seats for Consuelo's benefit performance. Isn't that enough for you, you miser?

Briquet. I love your daughter, Mancini, and I am sorry to let her go. What more does she need here? She has an honest job, wonderful comrades, and the atmosphere —?

Mancini. Not *she*, but *I* need something. You understand? [*Laughs.*] I asked you to increase her salary, Harpagon! and now, Mr. Manager, wouldn't you like to change me a thousand-franc note?

Briquet [with a sigh]. Give it to me.

Mancini [nonchalantly]. To-morrow. I left it at home. [*All three laugh.*] Laugh, laugh! To-day we are going with the Baron to his villa in the country; people say a very nice villa.

He. What for?

Mancini. You know, He, the crazes of these billionaires. He wants to show Con-

suelo some winter roses, and me his wine cellars. He will come for us here. What is the matter, my little Consuelo?

[Enter CONSUELO, almost crying.]

Consuelo. I can't, father! Tell him! What right has he to yell at me? He almost hit me with his whip!

Mancini [straightening up]. Briquet! I beg of you, as the Manager, what is this—a stable? To hit my daughter with a whip! I'll show this cub . . . a mere jockey. . . . No, the devil knows what it is, devil knows, I swear. . . .

Consuelo. Father . . .

Briquet. I will tell him.

Consuelo. Please don't. Alfred didn't hit me. It's a silly thing, what I told you. What an idea! He is so sorry himself. . . .

Briquet. I shall tell him anyhow that—

Consuelo. Don't you dare. You mustn't tell him anything. He didn't do a thing.

Mancini [still excited]. He must beg her pardon, the brat.

Consuelo. He's already asked me to forgive him. How silly you all are! I simply cannot work to-day and I got nervous. What nonsense! The silly boy asked me to forgive him, but I didn't want to. He, dear, good morning! I didn't notice you. How becoming your tie is! Where are you going, Briquet? To Alfred?

Briquet. No, I am going home, dear child. Zinida asked me to give you her love. She will not be here to-day, either. [He goes out.]

Consuelo. Zinida is so nice, so good. Father, why is it that everybody seems so nice to me? Probably because I am going away soon. He, did you hear the march that Tilly and Polly will play? [Laughs.] Such a cheerful one.

He. Yes. I heard it. Your benefit performance will be remarkable.

Consuelo. I think so, too. Father I am hungry. Have them bring me a sandwich.

He. I'll run for it, my Queen.

Consuelo. Please do, He. [Loudly.] But not cheese. I don't like it.

[MANCINI and CONSUELO are alone.]

MANCINI, lying back comfortably in an armchair, scrutinizes his daughter with a searching eye.]

Mancini. I find something particular in you to-day, my child. I don't know

whether it is something better or worse. You cried?

Consuelo. Yes, a little. Oh, I am so hungry.

Mancini. But you had your breakfast?

Consuelo. No I didn't. That's why I am so hungry. You again forgot to leave me some money this morning, and without money . . .

Mancini. Oh, the devil . . . what a memory I have. [Laughs.] But we shall have a very nice meal to-day. Don't eat very many sandwiches. . . . Yes, positively I like you. You must cry more often, my child; it washes off your superfluous simplicity. You become more of a woman.

Consuelo. Am I so simple, Father?

Mancini. Very. . . . Too much. I like it in others, but not in you. Besides, the Baron . . .

Consuelo. Nonsense. I am not simple. But you know, Bezano scolded me so much, that even you would have cried. The devil knows . . .

Mancini. Tss. . . . Never say "the devil knows." It isn't decent.

Consuelo. I say it only when I am with you.

Mancini. You must not say it when you are with me, either. I know it without you. [Laughs.]

Consuelo. Ha! Listen, Father! It's a new number of Alfred's. He makes such a jump! Jim says he's bound to break his neck. Poor fish. . . .

Mancini [indifferently]. Or his leg, or his back; they all have to break something. [Laughs.] They are breakable toys.

Consuelo [listening to the music]. I'll be lonesome without them, Father! The Baron promised to make a ring for me to gallop over as much as I want. He's not lying?

Mancini. A ring? [Laughs.] No, it's not a lie. By the way, child, when speaking of Barons, you must say, "he does not tell the truth," and not, "he lies."

Consuelo. It's just the same. It's nice to be wealthy, Father; you can do what you want, then.

Mancini [with enthusiasm]. Everything you want. Everything, my child. Ah! Our fate is being decided to-day. Pray

our clement God, Consuelo. The Baron is hanging on a thread.

Consuelo [indifferently]. Yes?

Mancini [making the gesture with his fingers]. On a very thin, silk thread. I am almost sure that he will make his proposal to-day. [Laughs.] Winter roses, and the web of a spider amongst the roses, in order that my dear little fly . . . He is such a spider.

Consuelo [indifferently]. Yes, a terrible spider. Father, oughtn't I to let him kiss my hand yet?

Mancini. By no means. You don't know yet, darling, what these men are.

Consuelo. Alfred never kisses.

Mancini. Alfred! Your Alfred is a cub, and he mustn't dare. But with men of that sort, you must be extremely careful, my child. To-day he would kiss your little finger, to-morrow your hand, and after to-morrow you would be on his lap.

Consuelo. Foui! Father, what are you talking about? You should be ashamed!

Mancini. But I know. . . .

Consuelo. Don't you dare! I don't want to hear such dirty things. I shall give the Baron such a slap! A better one than He—let him only try.

Mancini [with a deprecating gesture]. All men are like that, child.

Consuelo. It isn't true. Alfred is not. Ah! But where is He? He said he'd run, and he hasn't come back.

Mancini. The buffet here is closed, and he has to get the sandwiches somewhere else. Consuelo, as your father, I want to warn you about He. Don't trust him. He knows something. [Twirls his finger close to his forehead.] His game is not fair.

Consuelo. You say it about everybody. I know He; he is such a nice man, and he loves me so much.

Mancini. Believe me, there is something in it.

Consuelo. Father, you make me sick with your advice. Ah! He, thank you.

[He, breathing somewhat heavily, enters and gives her the sandwiches.]

He. Eat, Consuelo.

Consuelo. A hot one. . . . But you were running, He? I am so grateful. [Eats.] He, do you love me?

He. I do, my Queen. I am your court fool.

Consuelo [eating]. And when I leave, will you find another queen?

He [making a ceremonious bow]. I shall follow after you, my incomparable one. I shall carry the train of your dress and wipe away my tears with it. [Pretends to cry.]

Mancini. Idiot! [Laughs.] How sorry I am, He, that those wonderful times have passed, when, in the court of the Counts Mancini, there were scores of motley fools who were given gold and kicks. . . . Now, Mancini is compelled to go to this dirty circus in order to see a good fool; and still, whose fool is he? Mine? No. He belongs to everybody who pays a franc. We shall very soon be unable to breathe because of Democracy. Democracy, too, needs fools! Think of it, He; what an unexampled impertinence.

He. We are the servants of those who pay. But how can we help it, Count?

Mancini. But is that not sad? Imagine: we are in my castle. I, near the fireplace with my glass of wine, you, at my feet chattering your nonsense, jingling your little bells—diverting me. Sometimes you pinch me too with your jokes: it is allowed by the traditions and necessary for the circulation of the blood. After a while—I am sick of you, I want another one. . . . Then I give you a kick and . . . Ah, He, how wonderful it would be!

He. It would be marvellous, Mancini!

Mancini. Yes. Certainly! You would be getting gold coins, those wonderfully little yellow things. . . . Well, when I become rich, I shall take you. That's settled.

Consuelo. Take him, Father. . . .

He. And when the Count, tired of my chattering, will give me a kick with his Highness's foot, then I shall lie down at the little feet of my queen, and shall . . .

Consuelo [laughing]. Wait for another kick? I'm finished. Father, give me your handkerchief, I want to wipe my hands. You have another one in your pocket. Oh, my goodness, I must work some more!

Mancini [uneasy]. But don't forget, my child!

Consuelo. No, to-day I won't forget! Go on!

Mancini [looking at his watch]. Yes, it

is time. . . . He asked me to come over when you were ready. You must change your dress before I come back. [*Laughing.*] *Signori, miei complimenti.*

[*He goes out, playing with his cane.*

CONSUELO sits on the corner of the divan, and covers herself with her shawl.]

Consuelo. Hello, HE. Come and lie down at my feet, and tell me something cheerful. . . . You know, when you paint the laughter on your face, you are very good looking, but now, too, you are very, very nice. Come on, HE, why don't you lie down?

He. Consuelo! Are you going to marry the Baron?

Consuelo [*indifferently*]. It seems so. The Baron is hanging by a thread! HE, there is one little sandwich left. Eat it.

He. Thank you, my queen. [*Eats.*] And do you remember my prediction?

Consuelo. What prediction? How quickly you swallow! Does it taste good?

He. Very good. That if you marry the Baron, you . . .

Consuelo. Oh, that's what you're talking about. . . . But you were making fun.

He. Nobody can tell, my queen. Sometimes one makes fun, and suddenly it turns out to be true; the stars never talk in vain. If sometimes it is difficult for a human being to open his mouth and to say a word, how difficult it must be for a star. Think of it.

Consuelo [*laughing*]. I should say. Such a mouth! [*Makes a tiny mouth.*]

He. No, my dear little girl, were I in your place, I would think it over. And suppose suddenly you should die? Don't marry the Baron, Consuelo!

Consuelo [*thinking*]. And what is—death?

He. I do not know, my Queen. Nobody knows. Like love! Nobody knows. But your little hands will become cold, and your dear little eyes will be closed. You will be away from here. And the music will play without you, and without you the crazy Bezano will be galloping, and Tilly and Polly will be playing on their pipes without you: tilly-polly, tilly-polly . . . tilly-tilly, polly-polly . . .

Consuelo. Please don't, HE darling—I am so sad, anyway . . . tilly-tilly, polly-polly . . . [*Silence.*] HE looks at CONSUELO.]

He. You were crying, my little Consuelo?

Consuelo. Yes, a little. Alfred made me nervous. But tell me, is it my fault that I can't do anything to-day? I tried to, but I couldn't.

He. Why?

Consuelo. Ah, I don't know. There is something here. [*Presses her hand against her heart.*] I don't know. HE, I must be sick. What is sickness? Does it hurt very much?

He. It is not sickness. It is the charm of the far off stars, Consuelo. It is the voice of your fate, my little Queen.

Consuelo. Don't talk nonsense, please. What should the stars care about me? I am so small. Nonsense, HE! Tell me rather another tale which you know: about the blue sea and those gods, you know . . . who are so beautiful. Did they all die?

He. They are all alive, but they hide themselves, my goddess.

Consuelo. In the woods or mountains? Can one come across them? Ah, imagine, HE . . . I come across a god, and he suddenly takes a look at me! I'd run away. [*Laughs.*] This morning when I went without breakfast, I became so sad, so disgusted, and I thought: if a god should come, and give me something to eat! And as I thought it, I suddenly heard, honestly it's true, I heard: "Consuelo, somebody's calling you." [*Angrily.*] Don't you dare laugh!

He. Am I laughing?

Consuelo. Honestly, it's true. Ah, HE, but he didn't come. He only called me and disappeared, and how can you find him? It hurt me so much, and hurts even now. Why did you remind me of my childhood? I'd forgotten it entirely. There was the sea . . . and something . . . many, many . . . [*Closes her eyes, smiling.*]

He. Remember, Consuelo!

Consuelo. No [*opening her eyes*]. I forget everything about it. [*Looks around the room.*] HE, do you see what a poster they made for my benefit performance? It's Father's idea. The Baron liked it. [*HE laughs. Silence.*]

He [*slowly*]. Consuelo, my Queen! Don't go to the Baron to-day.

Consuelo. Why? [*After a silence.*] How fresh you are, HE.

He [lowering his head, slowly]. I don't want it.

Consuelo [getting up]. What? You don't want it?

He [bowing his head still lower]. I do not want you to marry the Baron. [*Imploring.*] I . . . I shall not allow it . . . I beg you!

Consuelo. Whom, then, would you ask me to marry? You, perhaps, you fool? [*with a rancorous laugh.*] Are you crazy, my darling? "I shall not allow." *He!* *He!* will not allow me! But it is unbearable! What business is it of yours? [*Walking up and down the room, looks over her shoulder at He, with anger.*] Some fool clown, whom they can kick out of here any minute. You make me sick with your stupid tales. Or you like slaps so much. Fool, you couldn't invent anything better than a slap!

He [without lifting his head]. Forgive me, my queen.

Consuelo. He is glad when they laugh at him. Some god! No, I shan't forgive. I know you. [*Makes same gesture as Mancini.*] You have something there! Laughs . . . so nicely . . . plays, plays, and then suddenly—hop! *Obey him!* No, darling, I am not that kind! Carry my train, that is your business—fool!

He. I shall carry your train, my queen. Forgive me. Give me back the image of my beautiful, piteous goddess.

Consuelo [quieting down]. You're playing again?

He. I am.

Consuelo [laughing]. You see! [*Sits down.*] Foolish *He.*

He. I see everything, my Queen. I see how beautiful you are, and how low under your feet your poor court fool is lying. Somewhere in the abyss his little bells are ringing. He kneels before you and prays; forgive and pity him, my divine one. He was too impudent; he played so cheerfully that he went too far and lost his tiny little mind, the last bit of understanding he had saved up. Forgive me!

Consuelo. All right. I forgive you. [*Laughs.*] And now will you allow me to marry the Baron?

He [also laughing]. And nevertheless I will not allow it. But what does a queen care about the permission of her enamoured fool?

Consuelo. Get up. You are forgiven. And do you know why? You think because of your words? You are a cunning beast, *He!* No, because of the sandwiches. That's why. You were so lovely, you panted so when you brought them. Poor darling *He.* From to-morrow you may be at my feet again. And as soon as I whistle, "tuwhoo" —

He. I shall instantly lie down at thy feet, *Consuelo.* It is settled! But all my little bells fell off to-day and —

[*BEZANO appears, confused.*]

Consuelo. Alfred! You came for me?

Bezano. Yes. Will you work some more, *Consuelo?*

Consuelo. Certainly. As much as you want. But I thought, Alfred, you were mad at me? I shan't dawdle any more.

Bezano. No. You didn't dawdle. Don't be offended because I yelled so much. You know when one has to teach, and —

Consuelo. My goodness, do you think I don't understand? You are too nice, unbearably nice, to like teaching such a fool as me. Do you think I don't understand? Come on!

Bezano. Come on! Hello, *He!* I haven't seen you yet to-day. How are you?

He. How are you, *Bezano?* Wait, wait a minute—stay here a minute, both of you—that way. Yes!

[*CONSUELO and BEZANO stand side by side, the jockey scowling, CONSUELO laughing and flushing.*]

Consuelo. Like Adam and Eve? How foolish you are! Terribly. [*She runs away.*] I shall only change my slippers, Alfred.

He. *Consuelo!* And how about Father and the Baron? They will come soon, to take you with them.

Consuelo. Let them come. They can wait. Not very important people. [*Runs away. BEZANO hesitatingly follows her.*]

He. Stay here for a while, *Bezano.* Sit down.

Bezano. What more do you want? I have no time for your nonsense.

He. You can remain standing if you want to. *Bezano*—you love her? [*Silence.*]

Bezano. I shall allow nobody to interfere with my affairs. You allow yourself too many liberties, *He.* I don't know you. You came from the street, and why should I trust you?

He. But you know the Baron? Listen. It is painful for me to pronounce these words: she loves you. Save her from the spider! Or are you blind, and don't see the web, which is woven in every dark corner. Get out of the vicious circle in which you are turning around, like a blind man. Take her away, steal her, do what you want . . . kill her even, and take her to the heavens or to the devil! But don't give her to this man! He is a defiler of love. And if you are timid, if you are afraid to lift your hand against her—kill the Baron! Kill!

Bezano [with a smile]. And who will kill the others, to come?

He. She loves you.

Bezano. Did she tell you that herself?

He. What a petty, what a stupid, what a human pride! But *you* are a little god! A god, youth! Why don't you want to believe me? Or does the street, from which I have come, bother you? But look, look yourself. Look in my eyes, do such eyes lie? Yes, my face is ugly, I make faces and grimaces, I am surrounded by laughter, but don't you see the god behind all this, a god, like you? Look, look at me! [*BEZANO bursts out laughing.*] What are you laughing at, youth?

Bezano. You look now as you did that evening in the ring. You remember? When you were a great man, and they sent for you from the Academy, and suddenly—Hup! He Who Gets Slapped!

He [laughing the same way]. Yes, yes, you are right, Bezano. There is a resemblance. [*With a strained expression, taking a pose.*] "It seems to me they sent for me from the Academy!"

Bezano [displeased]. But I don't like this play. You can present *your* face for slaps if you want to, but don't dare to expose mine. [*Turns to go.*]

He. Bezano!

Bezano [turning around]. And never let me hear any more about Consuelo, and don't dare to tell me again that I am a god! It is disgusting.

[*BEZANO goes out angrily, striking his boot with his whip. He is alone. Wrathfully, with a tortured expression, he makes a step towards the jockey, then stops, with soundless laughter, his head thrown backwards. The BARON*

and MANCINI find him in this position, when they enter.]

Mancini [laughing]. What a cheerful chap you are, He! You laugh when you are alone. [*He laughs aloud.*]. Stop it, fool! How can you stand it?

He [bowing low, with a large gesture]. How do you do, Baron? My humblest respects to you, Count. I beg your pardon, Count, but you found the clown at work. These are, so to speak, Baron, his everyday pleasures.

Mancini [lifting his eyebrows]. Tsss. But you are a clever man, He. I shall ask Papa Briquet to give you a benefit performance. Shall I, He?

He. Please do me the favour, Count.

Mancini. Don't overdo. Be more simple, He. [*Laughs.*] But how many slaps will you get at your benefit performance, when even on weekdays they ring you like a gong! A funny profession, isn't it, Baron?

Baron. Very strange. But where is the Countess?

Mancini. Yes, yes. I shall go for her at once. Dear child, she is so absorbed in her benefit performance and her work. They call this jumping work, Baron.

Baron. I can wait a little. [*Sits down, with his silk hat on his head.*]

Mancini. But why? I shall hurry her up. I shall be back at once. And you, He, be a nice host, and entertain our dear guest. You will not be bored in his company, Baron.

[*He goes out. He strides about the stage, smiling and glancing from time to time at the BARON. The latter sits with his legs spread apart and his chin on the top of his cane. The silk hat remains on his head. He is silent.*]

He. In what way would you like me to entertain you, Baron?

BARON. In no way! I don't like clowns.

He. Nor I Barons.

[*Silence. He puts on his derby hat, takes a chair with a large gesture, and puts it down heavily, in front of the BARON. He sits astride it, imitating the pose of the BARON, and looks him in the eyes. Silence.*]

He. Can you be silent very long?

Baron. Very long.

He [taps on the floor with his foot].
And can you wait very long?

Baron. Very long.

He. Until you get it?

Baron. Until I get it. And you?

He. I too.

[Both look at each other, silently, their heads close together. From the ring one hears the strains of the Tango.]

ACT FOUR

Music in the ring. More disorder in the room than usual. All kinds of actors' costumes hanging on pegs and lying in the corners. On the table a bouquet of fiery-red roses, put there by some careless hand. At the entrance, near the arch, three bare-back riders are smoking and chattering; they are all minor actors. All part their hair the same way; two wear small moustaches; the third one is clean-shaven with a face like a bull-dog.

The Clean-Shaven One. Go on, Henry! Ten thousand francs! It's too much even for the Baron.

The Second. How much are roses now?

The Shaven. I don't know. In winter they are certainly more expensive, but still Henry talks nonsense. Ten thousand!

The Second. The Baron has his own hot-house. They don't cost him anything.

Henry [throwing away his cigar, which has burned the tips of his fingers]. No, Grab, you're silly. There's a whole car-load full! One can smell the roses a mile away. They're to cover the entire arena.

The Shaven. Only the ring.

Henry. It's all the same. In order to cover the ring, you must have thousands and thousands of roses. You'll see what it looks like, when they've covered everything like a carpet. He ordered them to make it like a carpet! Do you see, Grab?

The Second. What a Baron's craze! Isn't it time yet?

Henry. No, we have time enough. I rather like it: a fiery-red tango on a fiery-red cover of winter roses!

The Shaven. Consuelo will be galloping on roses. And Bezano?

The Second. And Bezano on thorns. *[Smiles.]*

The Shaven. That youngster has no self-respect. I'd have refused.

Henry. But it is his job. He's got to do it. *[Laughs.]* Talk to him about self-respect! He's as angry and proud as a little Satan.

The Second. No, you may say what you like, it's an excellent benefit performance. It's a joy to look at the crowd. They're so excited.

Henry. Tss! *[All throw away their cigars and cigarettes, like school boys who are caught, and make way for ZINIDA, who enters with HE.]*

Zinida. What are you doing here, gentlemen? Your place is at the entrance.

Henry [with a respectful smile]. We are here just for a minute, Madame Zinida. We are going. What a successful evening! And what a glory for Papa Briquet!

Zinida. Yes. Go, and please don't leave your places. *[They go. ZINIDA pulls a drawer out of the desk, and puts in some papers. She is in her lion tamer's costume.]* HE, what were you doing near my lions? You frightened me.

He. Why, Duchess, I merely wanted to hear what the beasts were saying about the benefit performance. They are pacing in their cages, and growling.

Zinida. The music makes them nervous. Sit down, HE. An excellent evening, and I am so glad that Consuelo is leaving us. Have you heard about the Baron's roses?

He. Everybody is talking about them. The Hymeneal roses!

Zinida. Here are some, too. *[Pushes away the bouquet.]* You find them everywhere. Yes, I am glad. She is superfluous here, and disturbs our work. It is a misfortune for a cast to have in it such a beautiful and such an . . . accessible girl.

He. But it is an honest marriage, Duchess, is it not?

Zinida. I don't care what it is.

He. Spiders, too, need an improvement in their breed! Can't you imagine, Zinida, what charming little spiders this couple will create! They will have the face of their mother, Consuelo, and the stomach of their father, the Baron, and thus could be an ornament for any circus-ring.

Zinida. You are malicious to-day, HE. You are morose.

He. I laugh.

Zinida. You do, but without joy. Why are you without make-up?

He. I am in the third act. I have time. And how does Bezano feel about this evening. Is he glad?

Zinida. I didn't talk to Bezano. You know what I think, my friend? You, too, are superfluous here. [*Silence.*]

He. How do you want me to take that, Zinida?

Zinida. Just as I said. In fact, Consuelo sold herself for nothing. What is the Baron worth, with his poor millions? People say that you are clever, too clever perhaps; tell me then, for how much could one buy me?

He [*looking as if he were pricing her*]. Only for a crown.

Zinida. A baron's crown?

He. No, a royal one.

Zinida. You are far from being stupid. And you guessed that Consuelo is not Mancini's daughter?

He [*startled*]. What! And she knows it?

Zinida. Hardly. And why should she know it? Yes, she is a girl from Corsica whose parents are unknown. He preferred to use her for business rather than . . . But according to the law, she is his daughter, Countess Veronica Mancini.

He. It is nice, to have everything done according to law, isn't it, Zinida? But it is curious there is more blue blood in her than in this Mancini. One would say that it was she who found him on the street, and made him a count and her father. Count Mancini! [*Laughs.*]

Zinida. Yes, you are gloomy, *He*. I changed my mind, you'd better stay.

He. Will I not be superfluous?

Zinida. When she is gone, you will not. Oh! You don't know yet, how nice it is to be with us. What a rest for the body and mind. I understand you. I am clever, too. Like you, I brought with me from out there my inclination for chains, and for a long time I chained myself to whatever I could, in order to feel firm.

He. Bezano?

Zinida. Bezano and others; there were many, there will be many more. My red lion, with whom I am desperately in love, is still more terrible than Bezano. But it is all nonsense; old habits, which we are sorry to let go, like old servants who steal things.

Leave Consuelo alone. She has her own way.

He. Automobiles and diamonds?

Zinida. When did you see a beauty clad in simple cotton? If this one does not buy her, another will. They buy off everything that is beautiful. Yes, I know. For the first ten years she will be a sad beauty, who will attract the eyes of the poor man on the side-walk: afterwards she will begin to paint a little around her eyes and smile, and then will take—

He. Her chauffeur or butler as a lover? You're not guessing badly, Zinida!

Zinida. Am I not right? I don't want to intrude on your confidence, but to-day I am sorry for you, *He*. What can you do against Fate? Don't be offended, my friend, by the words of a woman. I like you; you are not beautiful, nor young, nor rich, and your place is—

He. On the side-walk, from which one looks at the beauties. [*Laughs.*] And if I don't want to?

Zinida. What does it matter, your "want" or "don't want"? I am sorry for you, my poor friend, but if you are a strong man, and I think you are, then there is only one way for you. To forget.

He. You think that that's being strong? And you are saying this, you, Queen Zinida, who want to awaken the feeling of love, even in the heart of a lion? For one second of an illusory possession, you are ready to pay with your life, and still you advise me to forget! Give me your strong hand, my beautiful lady; see how much strength there is in this pressure, and don't pity me.

[*Enter BRIQUET and MANCINI. The latter is reserved, and self-consciously imposing. He has a new suit, but the same cane, and the same noiseless smile of a satyr.*]

Zinida [*whispering*]. Will you stay?

He. Yes. I shan't go away.

Mancini. How are you, my dear? But you are dazzling, my dear! I swear you are marvellous! Your lion would be an ass, if he did not kiss your hand, as I do. . . . [*Kisses her hand.*]

Zinida. May I congratulate you, Count?

Mancini. Yes, merci. [*To He.*] How are you, my dear?

He. Good evening, Count!

Briquet. Zinida, the Count wants to pay immediately for the breach of contract with Consuelo . . . the Countess's . . . contract. Don't you remember, Mother, how much it is?

Zinida. I'll look it up, Papa.

Mancini. Yes, please. Consuelo will not return here any more. We leave to-morrow.

[ZINIDA and BRIQUET search among the papers. HE takes MANCINI roughly by the elbow, and draws him aside.]

He [in a low voice]. How are your girls, Mancini?

Mancini. What girls? What is this, stupidity or blackmail? Look out, sir, be careful, the policeman is not far.

He. You are much too severe, Mancini. I assumed, that since we are tête-à-tête . . .

Mancini. But tell me, what kind of tête-à-tête is possible, between a clown and me? [Laughs.] You are stupid, HE. You should say what you want, and not ask questions!

Briquet. Three thousand francs, Count.

Mancini. Is that all? For Consuelo? All right. I'll tell the Baron.

Zinida. You took—

Briquet. Don't, Mother, don't.

Zinida. Count, you drew in advance, I have it written down, eighty francs and twenty centimes. Will you pay this money, too?

Mancini. Certainly, certainly. You will get three thousand and one hundred. [Laughing.] Twenty centimes! I never thought I could be so accurate! [Seriously.] Yes, my friends. My daughter Consuelo—the Countess—and the Baron, expressed their desire to bid farewell to the whole cast.

He. The Baron, too?

Mancini. Yes, Auguste, too. They want to do it during the intermission. Therefore, I ask you to gather here . . . the more decent ones . . . but please don't make it too crowded! HE, will you, sir, be kind enough to run into the buffet and tell them to bring right away a basket of champagne, bottles and glasses—you understand?

He. Yes, Count.

Mancini. Wait a minute, what's the hurry—what is this, a new costume? You are all burning like the devils in hell!

He. You do me too much honour, Count, I am not a devil. I am merely a poor sinner whom the devils are frying a little. [HE goes out, bowing like a clown.]

Mancini. A gifted chap, but too cunning.

Briquet. It's the Tango colour, in honour of your daughter, Count. He needs it for a new stunt, which he doesn't want to tell in advance. Don't you want to sit down, Count?

Mancini. Auguste is waiting for me, but . . . it's all right. [Takes a seat.] Nevertheless I am sorry to leave you, my friend. High society, certainly, prerogatives of the title, castles of exalted noblemen, but where could I find such freedom, and . . . such simplicity. . . . And besides, these announcements, these burning posters, which take your breath in the morning, they had something which summoned, which encouraged. . . . There, my friends, I shall become old.

Briquet. But pleasure of a higher kind, Count. Why are you silent, Zinida?

Zinida. I'm listening.

Mancini. By the way, my dear, how do you like my suit? You have wonderful taste. [Spreads out his lace tie and lace cuffs.]

Zinida. I like it. You look like a nobleman of the courts of long ago.

Mancini. Yes? But don't you think it is too conspicuous? Who wears lace and satin now? This dirty democracy will soon make us dress ourselves in sack cloth. [With a sigh.] Auguste told me that this jabot was out of place.

Zinida. The Baron is too severe.

Mancini. Yes, but it seems to me he is right. I am a little infected with your fancy. [HE returns. Two waiters follow him, carrying a basket of champagne and glasses. They prepare everything on the table.]

Mancini. Ah! merci, HE. But please, none of this bourgeois exploding of corks; be slower and more modest. Send the bill to Baron Regnard. Then, we will be here, Briquet. I must go.

Zinida [looks at her watch]. Yes, the act is going to end soon.

Mancini. Heavens! [Disappears in a hurry.]

Briquet. The devil take him!

Zinida [*pointing to the waiter*]. Not so loud, Louis!

Briquet. No! The devil take him! And why couldn't you help me, Mother? You left me alone to talk to him. High Society! High pleasures! Swindler. [*He and ZINIDA laugh. The waiters smile.*]

Briquet [*to the waiters*]. What are you laughing about? You can go. We will help ourselves. Whiskey and soda, Jean! [*In a low and angry voice.*] Champagne!

[*Enter JACKSON, in his clown's costume.*]

Jackson. A whiskey and soda for me, too! At least I hear some laughter here. Those idiots have simply forgotten how to laugh. My sun was rising and setting and crawling all over the ring—and not a smile! Look at my bottom, shines like a mirror! [*Turns around quickly.*] Beg your pardon, Zinida. And you don't look badly to-night, He. Look out for your cheeks. I hate beauties.

Briquet. A benefit performance crowd!

Jackson [*looking in a hand mirror, correcting his make-up*]. In the orchestra there are some Barons and Egyptian mummies. I got a belly-ache from fright. I am an honest clown. I can't stand it when they look at me as if I had stolen a handkerchief. He, please give them a good many slaps to-night.

He. Be quiet, Jim, I shall avenge you. [*He goes out.*]

Zinda. And how is Bezano?

Jackson [*grumbling*]. Bezano! A crazy success. But he is crazy, he will break his neck to-morrow. Why does he run such a risk? Or perhaps he has wings, like a god? Devil take it. It's disgusting to look at him. It's not work any more.

Briquet. You are right, Jim! It is not work any more. To your health, old comrade, Jackson.

Jackson. To yours, Louis.

Briquet. It is not work any more, since these Barons came here! Do you hear? They are laughing. But I am indignant, I am indignant, Jim! What do they want here, these Barons? Let them steal hens in other hen roosts, and leave us in peace. Ah! Had I been Secretary of the Interior, I should have made an iron fence between us and those people.

Jackson. I am very sorry myself for our dear little Consuelo. I don't know why,

but it seems to me that we all look to-day more like swindlers than honest artists. Don't you think so, Zinida?

Zinida. Everybody does what he wants. It's Consuelo's business and her father's.

Briquet. No, Mother, that's not true! Not everybody does what he wants, but it turns out this way . . . devil knows why.

[*Enter ANGELICA and THOMAS, an athlete.*]

Angelica. Is this where we're going to have champagne?

Briquet. And you're glad already?

Thomas. There it is! Oh, oh, what a lot!

Angelica. The Count told me to come here. I met him.

Briquet [*angrily*]. All right, if he said so, but there is no reason to enjoy it. Look out, Angelica, you will have a bad end. I see you through and through. How does she work, Thomas?

Thomas. Very well.

Angelica [*in a low voice*]. How angry Papa Briquet is to-night.

[*Enter HE, TILLY, POLLY, and other actors, all in their costumes.*]

Tilly. Do you really want champagne?

Polly. I don't want it at all. Do you, Tilly?

Tilly. And I don't want it. He, did you see how the Count walks? [*Walks, imitating MANCINI. Laughter.*]

Polly. Let me be the Baron. Take my arm. Look out, ass, you stepped on my beloved family tree!

Angelica. It'll soon be finished. Consuelo is galloping now. It is her waltz. What a success she is having!

[*All listen to the waltz. TILLY and POLLY are singing it softly.*]

Angelica. She is so beautiful! Are those her flowers?

[*They listen. Suddenly, a crash as if a broken wall were tumbling down: applause, shouting, screaming; much motion on the stage. The actors are pouring champagne. New ones come in, talking and laughing. When they notice the director and the champagne, they become quiet and modest.*]

Voices. They're coming! What a suc-

cess! I should say, since all the orchestra seats . . . And what will it be when they see the Tango? Don't be envious, Alphonse.

Briquet. Silence! Not so much noise, please! Zinida, look here, don't be so quiet! High society!

[Enter CONSUELO, on the arm of the BARON, who is stiff and erect. She is happy. MANCINI, serious and happy. Behind them, riders, actors, actresses. The BARON has in his button-hole a fiery-red rose. All applaud and cry: "Bravo, bravo!"]

Consuelo. Friends . . . my dears . . . Father, I can't. . . . *[Throws herself into MANCINI'S arms, and hides her face on his shoulder. MANCINI looks with a smile over her head at the BARON. BARON smiles slightly, but remains earnest and motionless. A new burst of applause.]*

Briquet. Enough, children! Enough!

Mancini. Calm yourself, calm yourself, my child. How they all love you! *[Taking a step forward.]* Ladies and gentlemen, Baron Regnard did me the honour yesterday, to ask for the hand of my daughter, the Countess Veronica, whom you knew under the name of Consuelo. Please take your glasses.

Consuelo. No, I am still Consuelo, to-night, and I shall always be Consuelo! Zinida, dear! *[Falls on the neck of ZINIDA. Fresh applause.]*

Briquet. Stop it! Silence! Take your glasses. What are you standing here for? If you came, then take the glasses.

Tilly [trembling]. They are frightened. You take yours first, Papa, and we will follow.

[They take the glasses. CONSUELO is near the BARON, holding the sleeve of his dress coat with her left hand. In her right hand, she has a glass of champagne, which spills over.]

Baron. You are spilling your wine, Consuelo.

Consuelo. Ah! It is nothing! I am frightened, too. Are you, Father?

Mancini. Silly child. *[An awkward silence.]*

Briquet [with a step forward]. Countess! As the director of the circus, who was happy

enough . . . to witness . . . many times . . . your successes . . .

Consuelo. I do not like this, Papa Briquet! I am Consuelo. What do you want to do with me? I shall cry. I don't want this "Countess." Give me a kiss, Briquet!

Briquet. Ah, Consuelo! Books have killed you.

[Kisses her with tears. Laughter, applause. The clowns cluck like hens, bark, and express their emotions in many other ways. The motley crowd of clowns, which is ready for the pantomime, becomes more and more lively. The BARON is motionless, there is a wide space around him; the people touch glasses with him in a hurry, and go off to one side. With CONSUELO they clink willingly and cheerfully. She kisses the women.]

Jackson. Silence! Consuelo, from to-day on, I extinguish my sun. Let the dark night come after you leave us. You were a nice comrade and worker, we all loved you and will love the traces of your little feet on the sand. Nothing remains to us!

Consuelo. You are so good, so good, Jim. So good that there is no one better. And your sun is better than all the other suns. I laughed so much at it. Alfred, dear, why don't you come? I was looking for you.

Bezano. My congratulations, Countess.

Consuelo. Alfred, I am Consuelo!

Bezano. When you are on horseback; but here—I congratulate you, Countess. *[He passes, only slightly touching CONSUELO'S glass. CONSUELO still holds it. MANCINI looks at the BARON with a smile. The latter is motionless.]*

Briquet. Nonsense, Bezano. You are making Consuelo unhappy. She is a good comrade.

Consuelo. No, it's all right.

Angelica. You'll dance the Tango with her to-night, so how is she a countess?

Tilly. May I clink glasses with you, Consuelo? You know Polly has died of grief already, and I am going to die. I have such a weak stomach.

[Laughter; BARON shows slight displeasure. General motion.]

Mancini. Enough, enough! The intermission is over.

Consuelo. Already? It's so nice here.

Briquet. I shall prolong it. They can wait. Tell them, Thomas.

Mancini. Auguste, the musicians of the orchestra, too, ask permission to congratulate you and Consuelo. Do you . . . ?

Baron. Certainly, certainly.

[Enter crowd of musicians. The conductor, an old Italian, lifts his glass solemnly and without looking at the BARON.]

The Conductor. Consuelo! They call you Countess here, but for me you were and are Consuelo.

Consuelo. Certainly!

Conductor. Consuelo! My violins and bassoons, my trumpets and drums, all are drinking your health. Be happy, dear child, as you were happy here. And we shall conserve for ever in our hearts the fair memory of our light-winged fairy, who guided our bows so long. I have finished! Give my love to our beautiful Italy. Consuelo.

[Applause, compliments. The musicians one after another clink glasses and go out into the corridor. CONSUELO is almost crying.]

Mancini. Don't be so sensitive, my child, it is indecent. Had I known that you would respond this way to this comedy—Auguste look how touched this little heart is!

Baron. Calm yourself, Consuelo.

Consuelo. It is all right. Ah, Father, listen!

[The musicians are playing the Tango in the corridor. Exclamations.]

Mancini. You see. It is for you.

Consuelo. They are so nice. My Tango! I want to dance. Who is going to dance with me? [Looks around, seeking BEZANO, who turns away sadly.] Who, then?

Voices. Baron! Let the Baron dance! Baron!

Baron. All right. [Takes CONSUELO's arm, and stands in the centre of a circle which is formed.] I do not know how to dance the Tango, but I shall hold tight. Dance, Consuelo. [He stands with legs spread, heavily and awkwardly, like an

iron-moulded man, holding CONSUELO's arm firmly and seriously.]

Mancini [applauding]. Bravo! Bravo! [CONSUELO makes a few restless movements and pulls her arm away.]

Consuelo. No, I can't this way. How stupid! Let me go! [She goes to ZINIDA and embraces her, as if hiding herself. The music still plays. The BARON goes off quietly to the side. There is an unfriendly silence among the cast. They shrug their shoulders.]

Mancini [alone]. Bravo! Bravo! It is charming, it is exquisite!

Jackson. Not entirely, Count.

[TILLY and POLLY imitate the BARON and CONSUELO without moving from their places.]

Tilly [shrieking]. Let me go!

Polly. No, I'll not. Dance!

[The music stops abruptly. General, too loud laughter; the clowns bark and roar. PAPA BRIQUET gesticulates, in order to re-establish silence. The BARON is apparently as indifferent as before.]

Mancini. Really these vagabonds are becoming too impertinent. [Shrugging his shoulders.] It smells of the stable. You cannot help it, Auguste!

Baron. Don't be upset, Count.

He [holding his glass, approaches the BARON]. *Baron!* Will you permit me to make a toast?

Baron. Make it.

He. To your dance! [Slight laughter in the crowd.]

Baron. I don't dance!

He. Then another one, Baron. Let us drink to those who know how to wait longer, until they get it.

Baron. I do not accept any toasts which I do not understand. Say it more simply.

[Voice of a woman: "Bravo, HE!" Slight laughter. MANCINI says something hastily to BRIQUET; the latter spreads his arms in gesture of helplessness. JACKSON takes HE by the arm.]

Jackson. Beat it, HE! The Baron doesn't like jokes.

He. But I want to drink with the Baron. What can be simpler? simpler? Baron, let us drink to the very small distance

which will always remain 'twixt the cup and the lip! [*Spills his wine, and laughs.*]

[*The BARON turns his back on him, indifferently. The music plays in the ring. The bell rings.*]

Briquet [*relieved*]. There! To the ring, ladies and gentlemen, to the ring, to the ring!

[*The actresses run out. The crowd becomes smaller; laughter and voices.*]

Mancini [*much excited, whispers to the BARON*]. "Auguste, Auguste—"

Briquet [*to ZINIDA*]. Thank heaven they're beginning. Ah, Mother, I asked you . . . but you want a scandal by all means, and you always—

Zinida. Let me alone, Louis.

[*He approaches CONSUELO, who is alone.*]

Consuelo. He, deary, how are you? I thought you didn't want even to come near me. [*In a low voice.*] Did you notice Bezano?

He. I was waiting for my turn, Queen. It was so difficult to get through the crowd to approach you.

Consuelo. Through the crowd? [*With a sad smile.*] I am quite alone. What do you want, Father?

Mancini. Child! Auguste . . .

Consuelo [*pulling away her hand*]. Let me alone! I'll soon be—Come here, He. What did you say to him? They all laughed. I couldn't understand. What?

He. I joked, Consuelo.

Consuelo. Please don't, He, don't make him angry; he is so terrible. Did you see how he pressed my arm? I wanted to scream. [*With tears in her eyes.*] He hurt me!

He. It's not too late yet. Refuse him.

Consuelo. It is too late, He. Don't talk about it.

He. Do you want it? I will take you away from here.

Consuelo. Where to? [*Laughs.*] Ah, my dear little silly boy, where could you take me to? All right, be quiet. How pale you are! You too, love me? Don't He, please don't! Why do they all love me?

He. You are so beautiful!

Consuelo. No, no. It's not true. They must not love me. I was still a little cheerful, but when they began to speak . . . so

nicely . . . and about Italy . . . and to bid farewell, as if I were dying, I thought I should begin to cry. Don't talk, don't talk, but drink to . . . my happiness. [*With a sad smile.*] To my happiness, He. What are you doing?

He. I am throwing away the glass from which you drank with the others. I shall give you another one. Wait a minute. [*Goes to pour champagne. CONSUELO walks about thoughtfully. Almost all are gone. Only the principal figures are left.*]

Mancini [*coming to her*]. But it is really becoming indecent, Veronica. Auguste is so nice, he is waiting for you, and you talk here with this clown. Some stupid secrets. They're looking at you—it is becoming noticeable. It is high time, Veronica, to get rid of these habits.

Consuelo [*loudly*]. Let me alone, Father! I want to do so, and will do so. They are all my friends. Do you hear? Let me alone!

Baron. Don't, Count. Please, Consuelo, talk to whomever you please and as much as you want. Would you like a cigar, Count? Dear Briquet, please order them to prolong the intermission a little more.

Briquet. With pleasure, Baron. The orchestra crowd can be a little angry. [*Goes, and returns shortly. He gives a glass to CONSUELO.*]

He. Here is your glass. To your happiness, to your freedom, Consuelo.

Consuelo. And where is yours? We must touch our glasses.

He. You leave half.

Consuelo. Must I drink so much? He, deary, I shall become drunk. I still have to ride.

He. No, you will not be drunk. Dear little girl, did you forget that I am your magician? Be quiet and drink. I charmed the wine. My witchery is in it. Drink, goddess.

Consuelo [*lingering*]. What kind eyes you have. But why are you so pale?

He. Because I love you. Look at my kind eyes and drink; give yourself up to my charms, goddess! You shall fall asleep, and wake again, as before. Do you remember? And you shall see your country, your sky. . . .

Consuelo [*bringing the glass to her lips*]. I shall see all this; is that true?

He [growing paler]. Yes! Awake, goddess, and remember the time when, covered with snow-white sea-foam, thou didst emerge from the sky blue waters. Remember heaven, and the low eastern wind, and the whisper of the foam at thy marble feet. . . .

Consuelo [drinking]. There! Look! Just a half! Take it. But what is the matter with you? Are you laughing or crying?

He. I am laughing and crying.

Mancini [pushing HE away, slightly]. Enough, Countess, my patience is exhausted. If Auguste is good enough to allow it, then I, your Father—Your arm, Countess! Will you step aside, sir?

Consuelo. I am tired.

Mancini. You are not too tired to chat and drink wine with a clown, and when your duty calls you—Briquet! Tell them to ring the bell. It is time.

Consuelo. I am tired, Father.

Zinida. Count, it is cruel. Don't you see how pale she has become?

Baron. What is the matter with you, dear little Consuelo?

Consuelo. Nothing.

Zinida. She simply needs a rest, Baron. She hasn't sat down yet . . . and so much excitement . . . Sit down here, dear child. Cover yourself and rest a little. Men are so cruel!

Consuelo. I will have to work. [*Closing her eyes.*] And the roses, are they ready?

Zinida. Ready, dear, ready. You will have such an extraordinary carpet. You will gallop as if on air. Rest.

Polly. Do you want some moosic? We will play you a song; do you want it?

Consuelo [smiling, eyes closed]. Yes, I do.

[*The clowns play a soft and naïve song; tilly-polly, tilly-polly. General silence. HE sits in the corner with his face turned away. JACKSON watches him out of the corner of his eye, and drinks wine, lazily. The BARON, in his usual pose, wide and heavily spread legs, looks at the pale face of CONSUELO, with his bulging motionless eyes.*]

Consuelo [with a sudden cry]. Ah! Pain!
Zinida. What is it, Consuelo?

Mancini. My child! Are you sick? Calm yourself.

Baron [growing pale]. Wait a moment. . . . She was too much excited. . . . Consuelo!

Consuelo [gets up, looking before her with wide-open eyes, as if she were listening to something within herself]. Ah! I feel pain. Here at the heart. Father, what is it? I am afraid. What is it? My feet . . . my feet too . . . I can't stand. . . . [*Falls on divan, her eyes wide open.*]

Mancini [running about]. Bring a doctor! Heavens, it is terrible! Auguste, Baron . . . It never happened to her. It is nerves, nerves. . . . Calm yourself, calm, child—

Briquet. Bring a doctor! [*Somebody runs for a doctor.*]

Jackson [in a voice full of fear]. He, what is the matter with you?

He. It is death, Consuelo, my little queen. I killed you. You are dying.

[*HE cries, loudly and bitterly.*]

CONSUELO with a scream, closes her eyes, and becomes silent and quiet. All are in terrible agitation. The BARON is motionless, and sees only CONSUELO.]

Mancini [furious]. You are lying, rascal! Damned clown! What did you give her? You poisoned her! Murderer! Bring a doctor!

He. A doctor will not help. You are dying, my little queen. Consuelo! Consuelo!

[*BEZANO rushes in, cries: "Briquet!" becomes silent and looks with horror at CONSUELO. Somebody else comes in. BRIQUET is making gestures for someone to close the door.*]

Consuelo [in a dull and distant voice]. You are joking, He? Don't frighten me. I am so frightened. Is that death? I don't want it. Ah, He, my darling He, tell me that you are joking, I am afraid, my dear, golden He!

[*HE pushes away the BARON, with a commanding gesture, and stands in his place near CONSUELO. The BARON stands as before, seeing only CONSUELO.*]

He. Yes, I am joking. Don't you hear how I laugh, Consuelo? They all laugh at you here, my silly child. Don't laugh, Jim.

She is tired, and wants to sleep. How can you laugh, Jim! Sleep my dear, sleep my heart, sleep my love.

Consuelo. Yes, I have no more pain. Why did you joke that way, and frighten me? Now I laugh at myself. You told me, didn't you, that I . . . should . . . live . . . eternally?

He. Yes, *Consuelo!* You shall live eternally. Sleep. Be calm. [*Lifts up his arms, as if straining with all his forces to lift her soul higher.*] How easy it is now! —How much light, how many lights are burning about you. . . . The light is blinding you.

Consuelo. Yes, light . . . Is that the ring?

He. No, it is the sea and the sun . . . what a sun! Don't you feel that you are the foam, white sea-foam, and you are flying to the sun? You feel light, you have no body, you are flying higher, my love!

Consuelo. I am flying. I am the sea-foam, and this is the sun, it shines . . . so strong. . . . I feel well.

[*She dies. Silence. He stays a moment with lifted arms, then takes a long look, lets his arms fall, and shakingly goes off to one side. He stands still for a moment, then sits down, drops his head on his hands, and struggles loneliness with the torpidity of coming death.*]

Briquet [slowly]. She has fallen asleep, Mother?

Zinida [dropping the dead hand]. I am afraid not. . . . Step aside, Louis. Baron, it is better for you to step aside. Baron! Do you hear me? [*Weeps.*] She is dead, Louis.

[*The clowns and BRIQUET are crying. MANCINI is overwhelmed. The BARON and HE are motionless, each in his place.*]

Jackson [drawing out a large prismatic clown's handkerchief to wipe away his tears] Faded, like a flower. Sleep, little *Consuelo!* The only thing that remains of you is the trace of your little feet on the sand. [*Cries.*] Ah, what did you do, what did you do, *HE!* . . . It would have been better if you had never come to us.

[*There is music in the ring.*]

Briquet [gesticulating]. The music! Stop the music! They are crazy there. What a misfortune!

[*Someone runs off. ZINIDA approaches the crying BEZANO and strokes his bowed, pomaded head. When he notices her, he catches her hand and presses it to his eyes. The BARON takes out the rose from his button-hole, tears off the petals, and drops it, grinding it with his foot. A few pale faces peer through the door, the same masquerade crowd.*]

Zinida [over the head of BEZANO]. Louis, we must call the police.

Mancini [awakening from his stupor, screams]. The police! Call the police! It's a murder! I am Count Mancini, I am Count Mancini! They will cut off your head, murderer, damned clown, thief! I myself will kill you, rascal! Ah, you! [*He lifts his heavy head with difficulty.*]

He. They will cut off my head? And what more . . . Your Excellency?

Baron. Sir! Listen, sir! I am going for the police. Stop it, sir. [*He suddenly takes a step forward and looking He in the eyes, speaks in a hoarse voice, with a cough, holding one hand at his throat.*] I am the witness. I saw. I am a witness. I saw how he put poison . . . I—

[*He leaves the room, suddenly, with the same straight, heavy steps. All move away from him, frightened. He drops his head again. From time to time a tremor shakes his body.*]

Jackson [clasping his hands]. Then it is all true? Poisoned! What a vile man you are, *HE.* Is this the way to play? Now wait for the last slap of the executioner! [*Makes the gesture around his neck, of the guillotine. TILLY and POLLY repeat the gesture.*]

Zinida. Leave his soul alone, Jim. He was a man, and he loved. Happy *Consuelo!*

[*A shot is heard in the corridor. THOMAS, frightened, runs in and points to his head.*]

Thomas. Baron . . . Baron . . . his head . . . He shot himself . . .

Briquet [throwing his arms up]. God! What is it? The Baron? What a calamity for our circus.

Mancini. The Baron? The Baron? No. What are you standing here for? Ah!

Briquet. Calm down, Count. Who would have believed it? Such a respectable . . . gentleman!

He [lifting his head with difficulty; he sees only dimly with his dulled eyes] What more? What happened?

Thomas. The Baron shot himself. Honestly. Straight here! He's lying out yonder.

He [thinking it over]. Baron? [Laughs.] Then the Baron burst?

Jackson. Stop it! It's shameless. A man died and you . . . What's the matter with you, He?

He [stands up, lifted to his feet by the last gleam of consciousness and life, speaks strongly and indignantly]. You loved her so much, Baron? So much? My Consuelo? And you want to be ahead of me even there? No! I am coming. We shall prove then whose she is to be for ever. . . .

[He catches at his throat, falls on his back. People run to him.
General agitation.]

THE END

JOHN FERGUSON
By ST. JOHN ERVINE

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ST. JOHN ERVINE AND HIS PLAYS

ST. JOHN GREER ERVINE was born in Belfast, Ireland, in 1883. He was for a time in the insurance business; then, a dramatic critic on various newspapers; next, director of the Abbey Theatre, Dublin; and during the world war, a lieutenant in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. After the war he became dramatic critic on the London *Observer*; lectured in America; and during the season of 1928-29 was engaged as special dramatic critic on the *New York World*. His home at present is in England.

Besides his plays Ervine has written novels, essays, political studies, and books on the theatre, including a very good one on playwriting, as well as a large body of dramatic criticism. As a critic he is fearless, original, and incisive, and, still more remarkably, is an outstanding critic who is also a successful dramatist. In this capacity he is not prolific, for within the entire period of his productivity, about twenty years, he has written only nine long plays (one of them a dramatization), and seven plays in one-act. Nor does he attempt wide variety in subject-matter, form, and tone; for almost all of his plays are either serious or tragic pieces of naturalism or realistic light comedies and farces.

In general, Ervine may be termed a naturalist, as are Brighouse and Houghton of the Manchester group, and the young playwrights, such as Lennox Robinson and T. C. Murray, who gathered with Ervine about the Abbey Theatre in Dublin. Just as the Manchester group, encouraged by the Gaiety Theatre, was writing plays about the Midlands, so the Dublin group, finding stimulus in the Abbey Theatre, was writing about Irish life and character. The material of most of Ervine's earlier plays (which, it must be acknowledged, are also his best), was provided by Irish life in the cities and towns, though the scene of *Jane Clegg* (first produced by the Gaiety Theatre in Manchester) is laid in England. *Mixed Marriage*, which depicts the Catholic-Protestant struggle in Belfast; *Jane Clegg*, a drab but admirably life-like study of domestic life; and *John Ferguson*, his masterpiece, were all written within four years, near the beginning of his career. These three plays show in common an uncompromising naturalism combined with a clear and steady yet sympathetic insight into character, an utter sincerity, and a mastery of structure and style.

Within the past ten years Ervine's plays have been more varied in quality and, on the whole, much less distinguished. Such a play as *The Ship*, though certainly interesting, is not remarkable; *The Lady of Belmont*, an ironical sequel to *The Merchant of Venice*, contains excellent satire; *Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary* is a good farce; *The First Mrs. Fraser*, a clever light comedy, perfectly conventional, might have been written by many another than the author of the early plays.

John Ferguson is not only Ervine's masterpiece but is surely one of the great things—the really noble things—of modern English drama. Few contemporary plays embody such an admirable balance of plot, character, and enveloping atmosphere; and very few indeed present such a superb character creation as John Ferguson, one of the most utterly convincing, one of the most appealing, figures in modern drama. Son of the soil as he is, product of heredity and environment, he is yet universal.

John Ferguson was first produced at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, on November 30, 1915. In America its first production was in New York, by the Theatre Guild, on May 12, 1919.

CHARACTERS

JOHN FERGUSON, *a farmer*
SARAH FERGUSON, *his wife*
ANDREW FERGUSON, *his son*
HANNAH FERGUSON, *his daughter*
JAMES CAESAR, *a grocer*
HENRY WITHEROW, *a farmer and miller*
"CLUTIE"¹ JOHN MAGRATH, *a beggar*
SAM MAWHINNEY, *a postman*
SERGEANT KERNAGHAN, R.I.C.
Two Constables
A Crowd of Men and Women, Boys and Girls
¹"Clutie" is a slang expression meaning "left-handed."

*The action takes place in the kitchen of a farm-house in County Down, Ireland,
in the late summer of the year 1885*

JOHN FERGUSON

ACT ONE

It is the afternoon of a warm day in the late summer of the year 1885, and soft sunlight enters the kitchen of JOHN FERGUSON'S farm through the windows and the open door. The kitchen is comfortably furnished, although the FERGUSONS are no longer prosperous, for MRS. FERGUSON, who is now sitting by the door, mending socks, takes great pride in maintaining the appearance of fortune. She is a short, stout, healthy woman, pleasant and agreeable even when she is as harassed as she now is, and her mind is moulded in the kindness of an Ulster woman. She is not a very intelligent woman, and so her sympathies are sometimes flattened by her lack of perception, but, within her limitations, she is an excellent wife and a very good mother.

Her husband, JOHN FERGUSON, is sitting in front of the turf fire, with a rug wrapped round his legs. He is reading a large Bible to himself, and his lips move as if he were silently pronouncing each word. He is an elderly, tired, delicate-looking man, and his dark beard is turning grey. His eyes are set deeply in his head, and they are full of a dark, glowing colour. His voice is slow but very firm, although his words are gentle. He looks like a portrait of Moses—not that Moses who led the Israelites out of Egypt and was a great captain of hosts, but the Moses who surveyed the Promised Land from Mount Nebo in the Plains of Moab.

The furniture of the kitchen is good and substantial, and of the sort that one sees in a decent homestead. The door leading to the loaning ("loanie") or lane in front of the house is in the wall at the back of the scene. A person entering the kitchen from the loanie would have a large window on his right hand in the same wall as the door, and a staircase on his left hand. Beyond the staircase, near the front of the scene, is a door leading to other rooms and also to the scullery and the back of the farm. The fireplace is in the wall opposite that in which the staircase is set. Under the window is a large sofa. A dresser is set between the

foot of the staircase and the door leading to the yard. A large table sits in the centre of the room. JOHN FERGUSON'S chair now stands against one end of this table, so that he can place his Bible on it easily when he is tired of holding it. The ornaments are those customary in such a house. Over the fireplace a gun is suspended.

Sarah Ferguson. I wonder where Hannah is. I haven't seen her for an hour past.

John Ferguson [without looking up]. She's mebbe in the fields with Andrew. Listen to this, Sarah! [*He raises his voice as he reads from the thirtieth of the Psalms of David*] "I will extol thee, O Lord; for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me. O Lord, my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me. O Lord, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down into the pit. Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. [*He emphasises what follows*] For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." [*He turns to his wife*] Do you hear that, Sarah? There's great comfort for you!

Sarah Ferguson. Well, indeed, I hope it will, for we have need of joy in this house. We've bore enough trouble. Here's the farm mortgaged up to the hilt, and you sick and not able to do no work this long while, and Henry Witherow bothering you for the money you owe him! . . .

John Ferguson [holding up the Bible so that she can see it]. "Weeping may endure for a night," Sarah, "but joy cometh in the morning." Them's grand words! Don't be complaining now, for sure God never deserts His own people. We have His word for that, Sarah. We're tried a while, and then we're given our reward.

Sarah Ferguson. Well, we've earned ours, anyway! It's a great pity Andrew's such a poor hand on the farm.

John Ferguson. The lad was never meant for the land, Sarah. You know rightly I

dedicated him to the ministry the day he was born. It was a sore blow to the lad when I told him it couldn't be managed, but it was a sorer blow to me.

Sarah Ferguson. Ay, indeed, it was, John. You were always quaren set on Andrew.

John Ferguson [proudly]. He's my son! I have great hopes of Andrew.

Sarah Ferguson. Well, well, you would have done better, mebbe, to let him go on with his learning, for he's no use at all on the farm. I hope to my goodness his uncle Andrew'll send the money to pay the mortgage. It's quare him not writing this long while.

John Ferguson. He's mebbe had bother. He'll write if he has the money by him. You may be sure of that.

Sarah Ferguson. He never was much of a one for giving anything away, your brother Andrew, and mebbe he'll disappoint you the same as he's disappointed many another person.

John Ferguson. I know he's near with money, but all the same I think he'll be willing to lend me the price of the mortgage. Him and me was born in this house, and we played here together as wee lads. Our da was born here too, and his da before him. Andrew couldn't let the farm go out of the family after all them generations.

Sarah Ferguson. I trust, indeed, he'll not, but it's a quare poor look-out when you think he's never answered your letters to him this long time, and him knowing well you were sick and helpless. Dear knows what'll become of us all if he doesn't send the money! Henry Witherow's a hard man, John, and he'll not be willing to wait long. *[She rises and looks out of the door]* Here's Hannah now! I wonder is the mail in yet!

John Ferguson. We'll know in a wee while. *[He takes up the Bible again and resumes his reading]*

[HANNAH FERGUSON, a beautiful girl of twenty, enters the kitchen from the loanie. Her thick black hair is uncovered]

Sarah Ferguson. Is the mail in yet?

Hannah Ferguson [wearily]. The long-car only went by a minute or two ago. I met Clutie John at the end of the loanie, and he said the mail would be late the day. *[She goes to the window-seat and sits*

down] It's like Sam Mawhinney to be late the time we want him to be early.

John Ferguson [with gentle rebuke in his voice]. Hannah, child! You don't know what trouble the man may have had. It might not be his fault the mail's late. Sometimes there's a storm at sea, and that keeps the boats back. Mebbe the train was delayed. Many's a thing might have happened. You shouldn't be blaming Sam for what's mebbe not his fault.

Hannah Ferguson [going to her father, and putting her arms round his neck]. Da, dear, aren't you the quare one for making excuses for people!

Sarah Ferguson. Well, sure, a lot of them needs it. *[She has resumed her seat by the door and is again busy with her work of mending socks]*

Hannah Ferguson. How're you now, da? Are you better nor you were a while ago?

John Ferguson [cheerfully]. Ah, boys-a-boys, Hannah, what did you mind me of it for? I was near forgetting I was sick at all. That shows I'm better in myself, doesn't it now?

Hannah Ferguson [looking anxiously at him]. You're not letting on, are you, da?

Sarah Ferguson. Letting on, indeed! Did you ever know your da to let on about anything?

John Ferguson. Indeed, now, and I let on many's a time! There's whiles, when I'm sitting here before the fire, or mebbe there in front of the door when the days is warm, I pretend to myself I'm better again and can go out and do a day's work in the fields with any man. *[His voice drops into complaint]* I haven't been in the fields this long time.

Sarah Ferguson [sharply]. Now, don't be going and making yourself unhappy, John!

John Ferguson. No, woman, I won't. But it's hard for a man to be sitting here with a rug wrapped round his legs, and him not able to do a hand's turn for his wife and family.

Hannah Ferguson [fondling him]. Ah, da, dear!

John Ferguson [complaint now controlling his voice]. And me the man that was always active! There wasn't a one in the place could beat me at the reaping, not one. . . . *[He remembers the consolations of his faith, although his voice falters as he speaks the next sentence]* But it's the

will of God! [*He pauses for a moment, and then his mind wanders again to his illness*] Sometimes, when I hear the men in the fields, cutting the corn and gathering the harvest, and them shouting to one another and laughing hearty together, I near cry. Me not able to go out and help them to bring in the harvest . . . tied here like a wee child! . . .

Hannah Ferguson [*tearfully*]. Da, da, don't go on that way!

Sarah Ferguson [*impatiently*]. Ah, quit, the two of you! Hannah, I'm surprised at you coming in and upsetting your da, and him keeping his heart up all day!

Hannah Ferguson. I don't mean to bother you, da.

John Ferguson [*patting her hair*]. No, daughter, you didn't. I know that rightly. [*Stirring himself and speaking more briskly*] Ah, well! "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." God always has a word to comfort you when your heart's down. Mebbe there's a letter in Sam Mawhinney's bag this minute that'll cheer us all up. I'm a poor, mealy man to be complaining like that, Hannah, when there's many is worse off nor me . . . only I can't help it sometimes. It's when the men are coming down the loanie in the evening with their scythes over their shoulders, and them tired and sweating and hungry for their supper! . . . Well, God knows His own ways best, and there's many in the world has a harder time nor I have.

Hannah Ferguson [*trying to take his mind off his illness*]. I was letting on too, da!

Sarah Ferguson. Well, indeed, you might have employed your time to better advantage, Hannah. You can let on till you're tired, but you'll never alter anything that way.

John Ferguson. What were you letting on, daughter?

Hannah Ferguson. I was letting on that my uncle Andrew had sent you all the money you need!

Sarah Ferguson. Well, I hope your pretence will come true, for if he doesn't, we'll have to flit out of this. It'll break your da's heart to go, and it'll break my heart too. [*She rises and puts her work on the dresser*] I come here as a young girl, no older nor yourself, Hannah, to be married on your

da, and I've lived here ever since. I'll never be happy nowhere else.

John Ferguson [*ruminatingly*]. Ay, it'll be hard to go.

Sarah Ferguson. There's no sense or purpose in it, God forgive me for saying it!

John Ferguson. There's a meaning in it, whatever happens. I can't see God's purpose, but I know well there is one. His hand never makes a mistake.

Hannah Ferguson [*bitterly*]. It's quare and hard to see what purpose there is in misfortune and trouble for people that never done nothing to deserve it!

Sarah Ferguson. Ah, quit it, Hannah! If God was to hear you saying the like of that, he'd mebbe strike you dead.

John Ferguson. Daughter, dear, you're a young slip of a girl, or you'd never talk that way. [*Sternly*] Do you think God doesn't know how to look after His own world? [*The severity of his voice relaxes*] Everything that happens is made to happen, and everything in the world, the commonest wee fly in the bushes before the door there, has a purpose and a meaning. There's things hid from you and me because we're not fit to know them, but the more we fill ourselves with the glory of God, the better we get to understand the world. It's people that's full of sin, Hannah, that can't see or understand. That's sin—not knowing or understanding! Ignorance is sin. Keeping your mind shut is sin. Not letting the sun and the air and the warmth of God into your heart—that's sin, Hannah! [*He sinks back in his chair, fatigued by his outburst*]

Sarah Ferguson. There now, you've made yourself tired.

John Ferguson [*weakly*]. I'm all right, woman!

Hannah Ferguson [*going towards the door*]. I wish to my goodness that man Mawhinney would come with the letters!

John Ferguson. He'll soon be here now.

Hannah Ferguson [*looking out*]. He's never in sight yet! [*She speaks the next sentence petulantly, returning to her seat on the sofa as she does so*] Och, here's that man, Jimmy Caesar! I wonder what he wants!

Sarah Ferguson. I wouldn't be surprised but it's you he's after! This isn't the first time he's been here lately, nor yet the second.

Hannah Ferguson [crossly]. Och, ma, quit talking! I wouldn't marry him if he was the last man in the world.

Sarah Ferguson. Well, dear bless us, if he was the last man in the world, and I wanted him for myself, I wouldn't like to run the risk of making you an offer of him! Sure, what's wrong with the man?

Hannah Ferguson [contemptuously]. He's an old collie, that's what he is! He has no spirit in him at all! Look at the way he goes on about Henry Witherow and what he'll do to him when he gets the chance! He's had many a chance, but he's done nothing.

Sarah Ferguson. Would you have him kill the man?

Hannah Ferguson. He shouldn't go about the place threatening to have Witherow's life when he doesn't mean to take it.

John Ferguson. Daughter, dear, I don't like to hear you speaking so bitterly. It's foolish of Jimmy Caesar to talk in the wild way he does, though, dear knows, he's had great provocation. But he doesn't mean the half he says!

Hannah Ferguson. Well, he shouldn't say it then!

Sarah Ferguson. Ah, now, Hannah, if we were all to say just what we meant, more nor half of us would be struck dumb.

John Ferguson. Ay, you're right, woman! You are, indeed! Henry Witherow's a hard man, and he put many an indignity on Jimmy Caesar's family. If you knew all he's had to bear, Hannah, you'd pity him, and not be saying hard words against him.

Sarah Ferguson. Ay, indeed, John! Witherow 'll not be soft on us if we can't pay him what we owe him, and then, Hannah, you'll mebbe understand what Jimmy Caesar's feelings are.

Hannah Ferguson. I'll never understand the feelings of a collie. I like a man to have a spirit and do what he's said he'd do, or else keep his tongue quiet in his head.

Sarah Ferguson. Now, it's brave and hard to be having a spirit in these times. Sure, the man must have some pluck in him to turn round and make a good business for himself after him losing near every halfpenny he had, and that man Witherow near bankrupting him, and killing his old da and ma with grief. That's not a poor, paltry spirit, is it?

John Ferguson. You'd better quit talk-

ing about him now. He'll step in the door any minute. Where was he when you saw him, Hannah?

Hannah Ferguson. He was at the foot of the loanie.

Sarah Ferguson. It's a credit to him the way he's slaved and saved. I daresay he has a big bit of money saved up in the Ulster Bank. [She goes to the door and looks out] Ay, here he's coming! [She calls out to CAESAR] Is that you, Jimmy?

[CAESAR is heard to shout in response] If Hannah was to marry him, the way he wants her. . . .

Hannah Ferguson. I wouldn't marry him if he was rolling in riches and had gallons of gold!

Sarah Ferguson [returning to the kitchen]. Och, wheesht with you! Sure, the man's right enough, and, anyway, one man's no worse nor another!

[JAMES CAESAR comes to the door. He is a mean-looking man, about thirty-five years of age, and his look of meanness is not mitigated by his air of prosperity. His movements are awkward, and his speech is nervous. He is very eager to please HANNAH, whom he pretends not to see]

James Caesar. Good-day to you all!

John Ferguson. Good-day to you, Jimmy!

James Caesar [hesitating at the door]. Can I come in?

Sarah Ferguson. Sure, do! You know you're always welcome here, Jimmy!

James Caesar [entering]. It's kind of you to say that! [He puts his hat on the dresser] It's a brave day!

Sarah Ferguson. It's not so bad.

James Caesar. It'll do good to harvest. [Pretending to see HANNAH for the first time] Is that you, Hannah? I didn't see you when I come in first. I hope you're keeping your health?

Hannah Ferguson [coldly]. I'm bravely, thank you!

James Caesar. I didn't see you this while back, and I was wondering to myself were you not well or something. I'm glad to see you looking so fine on it. [To JOHN FERGUSON] Did you hear from your brother Andrew, John?

Sarah Ferguson. Sam Mawhinney's not got this length yet. Did you see him as you were coming up?

James Caesar. I did not. Are you keeping well, John?

John Ferguson. I'm as well as can be expected, Jimmy.

James Caesar. That's good. I'm glad to hear it. It'll be a great blow to you if you have to leave the farm.

John Ferguson. It will.

James Caesar [bitterness growing into his voice]. Ay, it's a quare blow to any man to have to leave the house he was born and reared in, the way I had to do. It's Witherow has your mortgage, isn't it?

John Ferguson. Ay.

James Caesar. God curse him!

John Ferguson [reproachfully]. Jimmy, Jimmy!

James Caesar. Ah, you're a forgiving man, John Ferguson, but I'm not, and never will be. Look at the way he treated me and mine. I've never forgot that, and I never will if I live to be a hundred years old. [Violently] I'll choke the life out of him one of these days!

Hannah Ferguson [turning away scornfully]. Ah, quit, for dear sake. You're always talking, Jimmy Caesar!

James Caesar [ashamedly]. Ah, I'm always talking, Hannah, and never doing! 'Deed and you're right! When I think of the things he done to me, I go near distracted with shame for taking it as quiet as I have done. I go out sometimes, demented mad, swearing to have his life—and I come home again, afraid to lay a finger on him. He's big and powerful, and he can take a holt of me and do what he likes with me. I'm heartsore at my weakness! That's the God's truth! You do well, Hannah, to be making little of me for a poor-natured man, but it's not for want of desire I don't do an injury to him. I haven't the strength—or the courage.

John Ferguson. What way is that to be talking, Jimmy Caesar? Would you sin your soul with a murder? Man, man, mind what you're saying and thinking! You're in God's grief already for the thoughts you have in your head. Them that has bad thoughts are no better in His eyes nor them that does bad deeds.

Sarah Ferguson. Ah, sure, you can't help having thoughts, whatever kind of a mind you have!

John Ferguson. You can help brooding

on them. What call has Jimmy to be wasting his mind on thinking bad about Henry Witherow? Your life isn't your own to do what you like with. It's God's life, and no one else's. And so is Henry Witherow's. If you take his life or any man's life, no matter why you do it, you're robbing God.

Sarah Ferguson. Ah, for dear sake, quit talking about murders. You'll have me out of my mind with fear. Sure, nobody wants to kill anybody these times, what with civilisation and all them things.

Hannah Ferguson [sneeringly]. Och, ma, don't disturb yourself! Sure, you know it's only talk!

James Caesar. Hannah!

Hannah Ferguson. What?

James Caesar. I wanted to have a talk with you, and I was wondering would you be coming down the town the night?

Hannah Ferguson [decisively]. I'm not.

Sarah Ferguson. Ah, now, Hannah, you can just go down and get a few things from Jimmy's shop that I'm wanting. I was thinking of going myself, but sure you can just step that length and bring them back with you; and while you're on the way, Jimmy can say what he wants to say.

Hannah Ferguson [sullenly]. You don't need the things till the morning, ma, and if you give Jimmy the order now, he can send them up the morrow.

James Caesar. Hannah, I want to speak to you particular. Will you not come out with me for a wee while?

Hannah Ferguson. I'm not in the way of going out again the night, thank you!

Sarah Ferguson. Now, you've nothing to do, Hannah, and you can go along with him rightly.

Hannah Ferguson. I've plenty to do.

[HENRY WITHEROW passes the window]

Sarah Ferguson. Lord save us, there's Witherow.

[JAMES CAESAR instinctively goes into the corner of the room farthest from the door. HENRY WITHEROW, a tall, heavy, coarse-looking man, with a thick, brutal jaw, comes into the kitchen. He has a look of great and ruthless strength, and all his movements are those of a man of decision and assurance. He does not ask if he may enter the kitchen and sit down; he assumes that he may do so]

Henry Witherow [sitting down]. Well, how're you all the day?

Sarah Ferguson [nervously]. We're rightly, thank God, Mr. Witherow!

Henry Witherow. I'm glad to hear it. I was just passing, John, and I thought I'd drop in and hear how you were getting on.

John Ferguson. That was thoughtful of you, Henry.

Henry Witherow. How're you, Hannah? [He looks closely at her] Boys, but you're getting to be a fine-looking girl, Hannah! [He turns to Mrs. Ferguson] You'll be having all the boys after her! Faith, I wouldn't mind going after her myself.

James Caesar [pale with anger]. Keep your talk to yourself, Henry Witherow!

Henry Witherow [contemptuously]. Ah, you're there, are you? You haven't a notion of him, have you, Hannah?

Hannah Ferguson. Your manners could be better, Mr. Witherow.

Henry Witherow [laughing]. Could they, now? And who would improve them, eh? Mr. James Caesar, Esquire, mebbe?

James Caesar. We want no discourse with you, Henry Witherow. Your presence in this house is not welcome! . . .

Henry Witherow. Oh, indeed! Have you bought the house? I've heard nothing about the sale, and I think I should have heard something about it. I hold the mortgage, you know. . . .

John Ferguson. There's no need for bitter talk, Henry. Jimmy forgot himself.

Henry Witherow. Ah, well, as long as he admits it and says he's sorry!

James Caesar. I'm not sorry.

Henry Witherow. God help you, your tongue's the strongest part of you. [To JOHN FERGUSON] Now that I'm here, John, perhaps we could discuss a wee matter of business. I don't suppose you want to talk about your affairs before all the neighbours, and so if Mr. James Caesar will attend to his shop. . . .

Sarah Ferguson [to HANNAH]. You can go down to the shop with him now, daughter, and leave your da and me to talk to Mr. Witherow. [She speaks quietly to HANNAH] For God's sake, Hannah, have him if he asks you. Witherow 'll not spare us, and mebbe Jimmy 'll pay the mortgage.

Henry Witherow [to JOHN FERGUSON]. I suppose you haven't had any word from Andrew yet?

John Ferguson. Not yet, Henry.

Henry Witherow. H'm, that's bad!

[SAM MAWHINNEY, the postman, goes past the window and then past the door]

Sarah Ferguson. Lord bless us, there's Sam Mawhinney away past the door. [She runs to the door] Hi, Sam, are you going past without giving us our letter?

Sam Mawhinney [coming to the door]. What letter, Mrs. Ferguson?

Sarah Ferguson [anxiously]. Haven't you one for us? . . .

Sam Mawhinney. I have not.

Hannah Ferguson. You haven't! . . .

Sarah Ferguson. Oh, God save us, he hasn't written after all!

Hannah Ferguson. Isn't the American mail in yet, Sam?

Sam Mawhinney. It's in, right enough. I left a letter at Braniel's from their daughter over in Boston. Were you expecting one?

John Ferguson [desolation in his voice]. Ay, Sam, we were thinking there might be one, but it doesn't matter. We'll not keep you from your work.

Sam Mawhinney. I hope you're not put out by it. It's a quare disappointment not to get a letter and you expecting it.

John Ferguson. Ay, Sam, it is.

Sam Mawhinney. Well, good-evening to you!

John Ferguson. Good-evening to you, Sam!

[The postman quits the door. SARAH FERGUSON sits down in a chair near the dresser and begins to cry. HANNAH stands at the window, looking out with hard, set eyes. JIMMY CAESAR stands near her, twisting his cap awkwardly in his hands. JOHN FERGUSON lies back in his chair in silence. They are quiet for a few moments, during which HENRY WITHEROW glances about him, taking in the situation with satisfaction]

Henry Witherow. I suppose that means you can't get the money to pay off the mortgage, John?

John Ferguson. I'm afeard so, Henry.

Henry Witherow [rising]. Well, I'm sorry for you. I have a great respect for you, John, and I'd do more for you nor for any one, but money's very close at present, and I need every penny I can put my hand

on. I'll have to stand by my bargain. I'm sorry for you all!

James Caesar. That's a lie, Henry Witherow, and you know well it is! You're the fine man to come here letting on to be sorry for John Ferguson when you would do anything to get him out of this. If you were sorry for him, what did you call in your money for when you knew he couldn't pay it? You know rightly you've had your heart set on the farm these years past, and you're afraid of your life he'll mebbe pay the mortgage. . . .

Henry Witherow [going to him and shaking him roughly]. I've stood enough of your back-chat, Caesar, and I'll stand no more of it.

James Caesar [feebly]. Let me go, will you?

Henry Witherow. I'll let you go when I've done with you.

Hannah Ferguson [going to WITHEROW and striking him in the face]. Go out of this house, Henry Witherow. It's not yours yet, and till it is, there's the door to you!

Henry Witherow [throwing CAESAR from him so that he falls on the floor, where he lies moaning and shivering]. Heth, Hannah, you're a fine woman! You are, in sang! It's a pity to waste you on a lad like that! [He pushes CAESAR with his foot] You ought to marry a man, Hannah, and not an old Jenny-Jo! [He turns to JOHN FERGUSON] John, I'll have to have a serious talk with you in a wee while, but it's no good stopping to have it now with all this disturbance. I'll go and see M'Conkey, the lawyer, first.

John Ferguson. Very well, Henry.

Henry Witherow. I'm sorry for you, but I must look after myself.

John Ferguson. Ay, so you must. It's a hard thing to have to leave the home you're used to, but it can't be helped. I'm getting an old man, and I haven't much longer here. I'd like to end my days where they were begun, but . . .

Hannah Ferguson [going to her father]. Don't take on, da! There'll mebbe be a way out of it all. [To WITHEROW] Mr. Witherow, will you not let the mortgage go on for a while longer? We've had a great deal of trouble lately, and my brother Andrew's not accustomed to the farm yet. If you were to give us more time, mebbe my uncle'll send the money later on . . .

Henry Witherow. Ay, and mebbe he'll not. Your uncle Andrew's not over-anxious to part with anything as far as I can see. I'm sorry, Hannah, but I can't ruin myself to oblige other people.

John Ferguson. It was to be. You can foreclose, Henry.

Sarah Ferguson. Andrew's a poor brother to you, John, to let you be brought to this bother and you sick and sore.

John Ferguson. Poor Andrew, he must be heart-scalded at not being able to send the money. He'd have sent it if he had had it by him. I know he would. I can picture him there, not writing because he hasn't the heart to tell us he can't send the money.

[CAESAR, who has risen from the floor, comes to JOHN FERGUSON and speaks almost hysterically]

James Caesar. John, I know rightly that Witherow has set his heart on your farm. I know he has, and he's an old hypocrite if he says he's sorry for you! But I'll spite him yet, I will! I'm willing to pay off the mortgage for you if it costs me every penny I have . . .

Sarah Ferguson [rising and embracing him]. Oh, God reward you, Jimmy!

James Caesar [putting her aside]. If Hannah 'll listen to me . . .

Henry Witherow. Ay, if Hannah 'll listen to you! Huh! You'd make a bargain on your ma's coffin, Jimmy Caesar!

James Caesar [weakly]. I don't want nothing more to say to you, Henry Witherow. Anything that passes between you and me now will come through a solicitor.

Henry Witherow. Ay, you're mighty fond of the law. You'll get your fill of it one of these days. [To HANNAH] Well, my bold girl, are you going to take the fine offer's been made for you here by Mr. James Caesar, Esquire? Because I'd like to know what the position is before I go. There's no good in me going to M'Conkey and incurring expense needlessly!

Hannah Ferguson. I bid you go before, Mr. Witherow. Will you have me bid you go again?

Henry Witherow. Ah, now, quit talking!

Hannah Ferguson. It's well for you my da's sick, and there's no man in the house to chastise you the way you deserve. I can't put you out myself, so you must stay if you won't go.

Henry Witherow [disconcerted, and be-

ginning to bluster]. Oh, come now, Hannah, there's no need to go on like that.

Hannah Ferguson [resuming her seat on the sofa]. I've said all I've got to say, Mr. Witherow. A decent man wouldn't be standing there after what I've said to you.

[The sound of a tin whistle is heard outside]

James Caesar. Mebbe you'll go now, Witherow!

Henry Witherow. If I go, it'll not be because you ask me! *[To HANNAH]* You've a sharp tongue in your head, Hannah! I'd like to cut a bit of it off for you! *[To JOHN FERGUSON]* Well, John, you'll mebbe let me know later on what course you'll take about the mortgage. I'll be up at the mill the rest of the day. Good-morning to you all! *[He goes out]*

James Caesar. Hell to him!

[The whistling which has persisted all this time stops suddenly, and HENRY WITHEROW is heard outside shouting, "Get out of my road, damn you!" and then CLUTIE JOHN McGRATH, the half-wit, is heard crying, "Ah, don't strike me, MR. WITHEROW"]

Sarah Ferguson [going to the door]. Ah, dear save us, he's coup'd Clutie John into the hedge!

James Caesar. That's all he can do—strike weak lads like myself, and beat poor fellows that's away in the mind like Clutie John!

Sarah Ferguson [returning to the kitchen]. Ah, well, he's not much hurt, anyway! *[Her eyes are still wet with tears, and she wipes them as she sits down]*

[The tin whistle is heard again, and continues to be heard until CLUTIE JOHN appears at the door]

James Caesar [to JOHN FERGUSON]. You heard what I said, John?

John Ferguson [picking up his Bible and preparing to read it again]. Ay, Jimmy, I heard you. You have a heart of corn! *[He reads]* "For his anger endureth not for a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." *[To his wife, who still weeps silently]* What are you crying for, Sarah? Do you not hear this from God's Word? "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." That's a promise, isn't it? Dry your eyes, woman! God's got everything planned, and He knows what's

best to be done. Don't be affronting Him with tears! . . .

James Caesar [touching him]. John, did you not hear me? I was saying I'd pay the mortgage if Hannah would only listen to me . . .

John Ferguson. Ay, Jimmy, I heard you right enough, and I'm thankful to you. It's kind and neighbourly of you, But Hannah has to decide them things for herself with the help of God, not with mine. There's no good in a man and a woman marrying if they have no kindly feeling for each other. I would rather Henry Witherow foreclosed nor let Hannah do anything she didn't want to do.

Hannah Ferguson. Da! *[She kneels beside him]*

John Ferguson [drawing her close to him]. Ay, daughter?

Hannah Ferguson [struggling to speak]. Da, I . . . I . . .

James Caesar [eagerly]. I wouldn't make a hard bargain with you, John! Do you hear me, Hannah? Your da and ma could live on in the place where he was born . . .

Sarah Ferguson. God 'll reward you, Jimmy!

[HANNAH FERGUSON gets up from her place by her father's side. She looks at the old man for a few moments. He takes her hand in his and presses it warmly, and then smiles at her]

John Ferguson. Whatever you think best 'll be right, Hannah!

Hannah Ferguson. Ay, da. *[To JAMES CAESAR]* I thank you for your offer, Jimmy! I'll . . . I'll have you!

John Ferguson [hoarsely]. Hannah?

Hannah Ferguson. I'll have him, da!

Sarah Ferguson [embracing her]. Oh, thank God, Hannah, thank God!

James Caesar [uncertainly]. I can't tell you all I feel, Hannah, but I'll be a good man to you.

John Ferguson. May God bless the two of you!

[The sound of the tin whistle grows louder. CLUTIE JOHN MAGRATH appears at the door. He is a half-wit, and his age is about thirty]

Clutie John. I see you're all there!

Sarah Ferguson. Och, away on with you, Clutie! We don't want you here with your whistle!

Clutie John [entering the kitchen]. Ah,

now, Mrs. Ferguson, what harm does my whistle do to you? [*To JAMES CAESAR*] Good-evening to you, Mr. Caesar!

James Caesar [*sharply*]. I have nothing for you!

Clutie John. That's a quare pity, Mr. Caesar! I was thinking to myself as I was coming along, "Clutie John, if you were to meet Mr. Caesar now, he'd mebbe give you the lend of a halfpenny!"

James Caesar. Well, you were thinking wrong, then, and you can just march on out of this as quick as you like. There's no money here for you.

Clutie John. Ah, well, the Lord will send relief, though you won't be the honoured instrument. Sure, I'll just play a tune to you for the pleasure of the thing. [*He puts the whistle to his lips, and then takes it away again*] You didn't kill Mr. Witherow yet, Mr. Caesar?

James Caesar [*furiously*]. Go 'long to hell out of this, will you?

[*He is about to strike CLUTIE JOHN, but MRS. FERGUSON prevents him from doing so*]

Sarah Ferguson. Ah, don't hurt the poor soul, Jimmy! Sure, you know rightly he's astray in the mind.

Clutie John. Ay, that's true, Mrs. Ferguson! That's true enough. I'm away in the head, and I ought to be locked up in the asylum! And I would be if I was worse nor I am! It's a quare pity of a man that's not distracted enough to be put in the madhouse and not wise enough to be let do what the rest of you do. It's a hard thing now that a man as harmless as myself can't be let play his whistle in peace.

James Caesar. Why don't you do some work?

Clutie John. Sure, didn't I tell you I'm astray in the mind!

James Caesar. It's a nice thing when a big lump of a man like yourself goes tramping about the country playing tunes on an old whistle instead of turning your hand to something useful. You can work well enough if you like.

Clutie John [*regarding his whistle affectionately*]. I would rather be whistling. There's plenty can work; but few can whistle.

Hannah Ferguson. What do you want, Clutie?

Clutie John. I want many's a thing that I'll never get. Did you ever hear me whistling, "Willie Reilly and His Colleen Bawn"? That's a grand tune, for all it's a Catholic tune!

James Caesar. We heard it many's a time, and we don't want to hear it again. Quit out of the place!

John Ferguson. Come here, Clutie!

[*CLUTIE JOHN goes to him*]

Did you want anything to eat?

Clutie John. I always want something to eat.

John Ferguson. Hannah, give him a sup of sweet milk and a piece of soda bread. Poor lad, his belly is empty many's a time.

[*HANNAH goes to get the bread and milk for CLUTIE*]

James Caesar. It's a nice thing for her to be attending on the like of him.

John Ferguson. Why shouldn't she serve him? We're all children of the one Father, and we're serving Him when we're serving each other.

Clutie John. Will I whistle a tune to you, Mr. Ferguson? [*He does not wait for permission, but begins to play "Willie Reilly and His Colleen Bawn"*]

Sarah Ferguson. Ah, quit it, will you? You'll have me deafened with your noise!

Clutie John. Do you not like my whistle, Mrs. Ferguson? It's grand music. You should see the wee childher running after me when I play it. "Play us a tune, Clutie John!" they shout when I go by, and sure I just play one to them. They're quare and fond of my whistle. It's only people with bitter minds that doesn't like to hear it.

[*HANNAH brings the bread and milk to him, and he puts down his whistle in order to take them from her*]

Ah, God love you, Hannah, for your kind heart!

Hannah Ferguson. Did Henry Witherow hurt you, Clutie, when he couped you in the hedge?

Clutie John. He did, in sang! He couped me head over heels, and me doing nothing at all to him. That's a bitter man, Hannah, that would take the bite out of your mouth if it would bring a happorth of profit to him. He never was known to give anything to anybody, that man! It's a poor and hungry house he has. I was there one day when he was at his dinner, and he

never as much as asked me had I a mouth on me at all.

James Caesar. Ay, you're right there! You are, indeed! There's no charity or loving-kindness about him.

Clutie John. Well, he's not the only one in the world that's like that!

James Caesar. There's people says he sold his soul to the devil.

Clutie John. Ah, why would the devil be buying souls when he can get millions of them for nothing? [*To JOHN FERGUSON*] Did your brother Andrew send the money to pay off the mortgage, Mr. Ferguson?

James Caesar. What do you know about his brother Andrew?

Clutie John. I know many's a thing! I can tell you where a kingfisher has his nest this minute. I saw a golden eagle once! It was in the West I saw it when I was whistling in Connacht. It was a great big bird with a beak on it that would tear the life out of you if it was that way inclined. [*He finishes the milk*] This is the grand sweet milk! And the fine new bread, too! Isn't it grand now to have plenty of that? Will you not let me play a tune to you to reward you? Sure, I'll not ask you to give me the lend of a halfpenny for it, though you can if you like! I'll do it just for the pleasure of it.

John Ferguson. No, Clutie, we can't have you playing your whistle here the night. You must go home now. We have something important to talk about.

Sarah Ferguson. Go on, Clutie John! Away home with you now! We've had enough of your chat for one night. You can finish your bread in the loanie.

James Caesar. I'm going now, Hannah. Will you walk a piece of the road with me? I've not had you a minute to myself yet with all these interruptions!

Hannah Ferguson [*submissively*]. Very well, Jimmy!

Clutie John [*astonished*]. Are you going to marry him, Hannah?

Hannah Ferguson. Ay, Clutie.

Clutie John [*incredulously*]. Ah, you're coddling!

James Caesar. Come on, Hannah, and not be wasting your time talking to him! [*He goes to the door*] Here's Andrew coming across the fields. We'd better wait and tell him.

Clutie John. It'll be a great surprise for him.

Sarah Ferguson. Ay, and great joy to him when he knows we'll not have to quit the farm after all.

[*ANDREW FERGUSON enters. He is a slight, delicate-looking lad of nineteen, nearer in looks to his father than his mother. He is very tired after his work in the fields, and he carelessly throws the bridle he is carrying into a corner of the kitchen as if he were too fatigued to put it in its proper place*]

Andrew Ferguson. Good-evening to you, Jimmy!

James Caesar. Good-evening, Andrew! You're looking tired on it!

Andrew Ferguson [*sitting down heavily*]. I am tired. How're you, da?

John Ferguson. I'm rightly, son!

Andrew Ferguson. Ma, can I have a drop of sweet milk to drink? I'm nearly dead with the drouth.

[*MRS. FERGUSON goes to the crock to get the milk for him*]

James Caesar. Andrew, I've great news for you. Me and your sister's going to be married on it.

Andrew Ferguson [*starting up*]. You're what?

[*His mother puts a cup of milk into his hands*]

Thank you, ma!

James Caesar. Ay, we're going to be married, Andrew. Hannah's just settled it.

Sarah Ferguson. And we'll not have to quit out of the farm after all, Andrew! Jimmy says he'll pay the mortgage off!

Andrew Ferguson [*vaguely*]. But I thought! . . . [*He turns to HANNAH*]

Hannah Ferguson [*quickly*]. It's kind of Jimmy, isn't it, Andrew?

Andrew Ferguson [*after a pause*]. Ay . . . it's kind!

James Caesar. We just stopped to tell the news to you, Andrew, to hearten you up after your day's work, and now Hannah and me's going for a bit of a dandher together. We haven't had a chance of a word by ourselves yet, and you know the way a couple likes to be by their lone, don't you? Are you ready, Hannah?

Hannah Ferguson. Ay.

James Caesar. Well, come on! Good-night to you all!

All. Good-night, Jimmy!

Clutie John. God reward you, Mr. Caesar.
James Caesar [contemptuously]. Och, you!

[*He goes out.* HANNAH follows him to the door]

Hannah Ferguson. I won't be long before I'm back. [*She goes out*]

Andrew Ferguson. Da, is it true about Hannah and Jimmy?

John Ferguson. Ay, son, it's true. You saw them going out together.

Andrew Ferguson. But . . . did she do it of her own free will?

John Ferguson. Would I force her to it, Andrew?

Andrew Ferguson. No . . . only . . . I suppose my uncle Andrew didn't write, then?

John Ferguson. No.

Andrew Ferguson. I wonder what made her . . . It's a quare set-out, this!

Clutie John. Did you never hear the story of the girl that killed herself over the head of love? It's a quare sad story.

Sarah Ferguson. Ah, wheesht with you, Clutie! Didn't I tell you before to quit out of this?

Clutie John [coaxingly]. Let me stay a wee while longer here by the fire, Mrs. Ferguson. I'll not be disturbing you.

Sarah Ferguson. Well, close the door, then, and don't be talking so much!

[CLUTIE JOHN does as she bids him]
Go up there now by the fire, and content yourself.

[CLUTIE sits down in a corner of the fireplace. MRS. FERGUSON seats herself on the sofa]

Andrew Ferguson. I saw Witherow going down the loanie. I suppose he was in here about the mortgage?

John Ferguson. Ay, he was. He knows about Hannah and Jimmy.

Sarah Ferguson. There was a row between Witherow and Jimmy, and they had a bit of a scuffle. Witherow caught a holt of Jimmy and knocked him down, and then Hannah went forward and struck Witherow flat in the face. You could have knocked me down with a feather when she did it.

Andrew Ferguson. That was a queer thing for her to do. Mebbe she's changed her mind about him. She could hardly find a word hard enough for him one time. I suppose it's all right. It's a load off my mind

anyway to hear that the farm's safe, though God knows I'm a poor hand at working it.

John Ferguson. You'll get into the way of it in a wee while, son, and mebbe I'll be able to give you more help, now my mind's at ease. It's hard on you that was reared for the ministry to have to turn your hand to farming and you not used to it!

Andrew Ferguson. I daresay it'll do me some sort of good.

Clutie John. Listen! The girl I was telling you about, the one that killed herself, it was because her boy fell out with her. That was the cause of it! She cried her eyes out to him, but it made no differs, and so she threw herself off a hill and was killed dead.

Andrew Ferguson. Wheesht, Clutie!

Sarah Ferguson. Dear only knows where you get all them stories from that you're always telling, Clutie!

Clutie John. I hear them in my travels.

Sarah Ferguson. Do you never hear no comic ones?

Clutie John. Ah, I can't mind the comic ones. I just mind the sad ones. Them's the easiest to mind. They say the man was sorry afterwards when he heard tell she'd killed herself, but sure it was no use being sorry then. He should have been sorry before. It was a great lep she took.

Andrew Ferguson. What's Jimmy going to do about the mortgage? Is he going to take it on himself or what?

John Ferguson. I suppose so. We haven't settled anything. He said I could stay on here, your ma and me, with you to manage the farm.

Sarah Ferguson. It's brave and kind of him to do the like.

Andrew Ferguson. I don't see where the kindness comes in if he gets Hannah to marry him over it! I hope to God she's not doing it just to save the farm.

John Ferguson. It was her own choice, Andrew, son. I said to her I would rather go into the Poorhouse nor have her do anything against her will. I'm not saying I'm not glad she's consented to have Jimmy, for that would be a lie. I am glad . . .

Andrew Ferguson. Because the farm's safe, da?

John Ferguson. Ay, Andrew!

[*They are silent for a few moments*]
What are you thinking, son? Are you thinking I'm letting her marry Jimmy against her

will just to save the farm? Is that what you're thinking?

Andrew Ferguson [evasively]. I don't know what to think, da.

John Ferguson. I left her to her own choice. Didn't I, Sarah?

Sarah Ferguson. Ay, John, you did, and sure what does it matter, anyway? She's a young slip of a girl with wayward fancies in her head, mebbe, but Jimmy's as good and substantial a man as she's like to get, and he'll be a good husband to her. It's a great thing for a girl to get a comfortable home to go to when she leaves the one she was reared in. There's plenty of young women does be running after this and running after that, but sure there's nothing in the end to beat a kind man and a good home where the money is easy and regular.

Andrew Ferguson. It's easy to be saying that, ma, when you're past your desires.

Sarah Ferguson. I got my desire, Andrew, when I got your da. I never desired no one else but him.

Andrew Ferguson. Would you like to have married Jimmy Caesar if he'd been your match when you were Hannah's age?

Sarah Ferguson. There was never no question of me marrying any one but your da . . .

Andrew Ferguson. But if there had—if your da's farm had been mortgaged like this one? . . .

Sarah Ferguson. Ah, what's the good of if-ing and supposing? There's a deal too much of that goes on in this house. And, anyway, we can't let your da be turned out of his home.

Andrew Ferguson. Then that is the reason! Hannah's marrying Jimmy Caesar for our sakes, not for her own!

John Ferguson. No, no, Andrew, son, that's not it. I tell you she took him of her own free will. I wouldn't put no compulsion on her . . .

Andrew Ferguson. No, da, I know you wouldn't; but are you sure you're not ready to believe she's taking him of her own free will just because she says she is?

Sarah Ferguson. Sure, what else can he do?

John Ferguson. God knows, Andrew, it'll hurt me sore to leave this house, but I'd go gladly out of it sooner nor cause Hannah a moment's unhappiness. I'm trying

hard to do what's right. I don't think I'm acting hypocritically, and I'm not deceiving myself . . .

[The door opens suddenly, and HANNAH enters in a state of agitation. She closes the door behind her, and then stands with her face to it. She begins to sob without restraint]

John Ferguson [rising from his chair]. What is it, daughter?

Andrew Ferguson [going to her]. Hannah!

Sarah Ferguson. Don't bother her! [Going to her and drawing her into her arms] There, Hannah, dear, don't disturb yourself, daughter. [To the others] She's overwrought with the excitement. That's what it is! [To Hannah] Come and sit down, dear!

[She draws HANNAH towards the sofa, where they both sit down. HANNAH buries her face in her mother's shoulder and sobs bitterly]

Sarah Ferguson. Control yourself, daughter! You're all right now! No one'll harm you here!

John Ferguson. Are you not well, Hannah?

Andrew Ferguson [coming close to his mother and sister]. Hannah, do you not want to marry Jimmy Caesar?

Sarah Ferguson. Ah, wheesht with you, Andrew, and not be putting notions into her head! It's just overwrought she is. You know well she's been as anxious about the farm as any of us, and about your da, too, and she bore the bother well, but now that it's all settled, she's had to give way. Sure, that's natural! There, daughter, dear, just cry away till you're better. [She soothes HANNAH as she speaks to her]

John Ferguson [kicking the rug from his legs and going unsteadily to his wife and daughter]. Hannah!

[HANNAH, still sobbing, does not reply] Hannah, daughter, do you hear me?

Hannah Ferguson [without raising her head]. Ay, da!

John Ferguson. Listen to me a while! [He tries to raise her face to his] Look up at me, daughter!

[She turns towards him] Don't cry, Hannah! I can't bear to see you crying, dear! [He makes her stand up, and then he clasps her to him] Listen to

me, Hannah! I've never deceived you nor been unjust to you, have I, daughter?

Hannah Ferguson. No, da.

John Ferguson. And you know I'd beg my bread from door to door sooner nor hurt you, don't you? Isn't that true?

Hannah Ferguson. Ay, da, it is.

John Ferguson. Well, don't be afeard to say what's in your mind, then! What is it that's upsetting you?

Hannah Ferguson [putting her arms about his neck, and drawing herself closer to him] Oh, da, I can't . . . I can't! . . .

Sarah Ferguson. You can't what?

John Ferguson. Do you not want to marry Jimmy?

Hannah Ferguson [sobbing anew]. I can't thole him, da! . . .

John Ferguson. Very well, daughter! That'll be all right! Don't annoy yourself no more about him, dear. It'll be all right.

Hannah Ferguson. I tried hard to want him, da, but I couldn't, and when he bid me good-night and tried to kiss me out in the loonie, I near died! . . .

John Ferguson. I know, daughter.

Sarah Ferguson [starting up in fear and anger]. But you promised him, Hannah! John, you're never going to let her break her word to the man? . . .

John Ferguson. Wheesht, woman!

Sarah Ferguson [to her son]. Andrew! . . . [She sees that ANDREW's sympathies are with HANNAH] Hannah, think shame of yourself!

Hannah Ferguson. I can't take him, ma, I can't!

Sarah Ferguson. Do you want to see your da turned out of the home he was born in, and him old and sick and not able to help himself?

John Ferguson [angrily]. Quit it, woman, when I tell you!

Sarah Ferguson. What's wrong with the man that she won't take him? There isn't a decenter, quieter fellow in the place, and him never took drink nor played devil's cards in his life. There's plenty of girls would give the two eyes out of their head to have the chance of him. Martha M'Clurg and Ann Close and Maggie M'Conkey, the whole lot of them, would jump with joy if he was to give a word to them [She turns on HANNAH], and what call have you to be setting yourself up when a decent, quiet

man offers for you, and you knowing all that depends on it?

Andrew Ferguson. Ma, that's no way to talk to her!

Sarah Ferguson. I'll say what I want to say.

Andrew Ferguson. You'll say no more. If I hear you speaking another word to her like that, I'll walk out of the door and never come back again.

Sarah Ferguson [sitting down and weeping helplessly]. Oh, you're all again' me, your da and Hannah and you! I'll have to quit the house I was brought to when I was a young girl, and mebbe live in a wee house in the town or go into the Union!

John Ferguson [putting HANNAH into his chair]. Sit down, daughter, and quieten yourself. [To his wife] If we have to go into the Poorhouse, Sarah, we'll have to go. [To his son] Put on your top-coat, Andrew, and go up to Witherow's and tell him he can take the farm . . .

Hannah Ferguson [recovering herself slightly]. No, da, no. I'm all right again. I'll marry Jimmy! I'm ashamed of the way I was just the upset that made me like it.

Sarah Ferguson. Ay, daughter, that was it.

John Ferguson. Wheesht, Sarah. Go on, Andrew.

Andrew Ferguson. All right, da.

Sarah Ferguson [angrily]. Let her go herself and finish her work! The lad's wore out with tiredness . . .

Andrew Ferguson. I'm not that tired, ma.

Hannah Ferguson. [firmly]. I'll go, Andrew. It'll quieten me down to have the walk. [To her father] Jimmy doesn't know yet, da. I didn't tell him, and he's coming up here the night after he shuts his shop. Mebbe you'll tell him before I come back? . . .

John Ferguson. All right, daughter, I will. [To ANDREW] Hannah'll go, Andrew. She doesn't want to be here when Jimmy comes. [To HANNAH] Put a shawl over your head, daughter, and wrap yourself well from the night-air.

Hannah Ferguson. Ay, da!

[She goes upstairs to make herself ready to go out. CLUTIE JOHN makes a faint sound on his whistle.]

John Ferguson. Ah, are you still there, Clutie John? I'd near forgot about you.

Clutie John. Will I play "Willie Reilly and his Colleen Bawn" to you?

John Ferguson. No, boy, not the night. Just keep quiet there in the heat of the fire.

Clutie John. It's a brave warm fire. It's well to be them that has a good fire whenever they want it.

[*HANNAH, wearing a shawl over her head, comes downstairs and goes across the kitchen to the door*]

John Ferguson. You'll not be long, Hannah?

Hannah Ferguson. No, da. [*She opens the door and goes out, closing it behind her*]

John Ferguson. I wonder will Witherow let the farm to some one else or will he till it himself?

Andrew Ferguson. He'll mebbe till it himself.

Sarah Ferguson. I'd better be laying the supper for you all. Is Clutie John to have his here?

John Ferguson. Ay, let him have a bite to eat. We'll mebbe not 'e able to . . . [*He breaks off suddenly and turns to his son*] Light the lamp, Andrew, and draw the blinds. [*He seats himself again in his chair*]

Andrew Ferguson. Draw the blinds, Clutie.

[*ANDREW lights the lamp while CLUTIE draws the blinds and MRS. FERGUSON lays the table for supper*]

Andrew Ferguson. I wonder what time Jimmy'll come.

John Ferguson. I hope he'll come soon so that he won't be here when Hannah comes back.

Andrew Ferguson. Ay. Will I set the lamp near your elbow, da?

John Ferguson. Ay, son, and reach the Bible to me, if you please.

[*ANDREW hands the Bible to him*] Thank you, son.

ACT TWO

It is more than an hour later, and it is quite dark outside. JOHN FERGUSON and his wife and son are sitting at the table, eating their supper. CLUTIE JOHN McGRATH is still seated in the corner of the fireplace. He has laid his whistle aside and is engaged in eat-

ing the supper given to him by MRS. FERGUSON.

Sarah Ferguson. Hannah's gey and long in getting back from Witherow's.

John Ferguson. Ay.

Sarah Ferguson. I wonder did she change her mind about Jimmy and go to the shop instead of going to Witherow's. It's quare him not coming before this!

Andrew Ferguson. Ah, I don't think she'd do that. Hannah's not the sort to change sudden.

Sarah Ferguson. Well, she changed sudden enough the night!

Andrew Ferguson. Ah, that was because she was doing something she didn't want to do.

Sarah Ferguson. Well, if she hasn't changed her mind, and Jimmy comes now, we'll have to give him his supper, and then Hannah'll mebbe be here before he goes away again. It'll be quare and awkward for us all.

Andrew Ferguson. Well, sure, you can tell him when he comes, and then he'll not be wanting to stop to his supper.

Sarah Ferguson. Och, we'd have to offer the man something to eat anyway! It's only neighbourly to do that much. [*She turns to CLUTIE JOHN*] Will you have some more tea, Clutie?

Clutie John. Ay, if you please, Mrs. Ferguson. It's quare nice tea. I don't often get the like of that any place I go.

Andrew Ferguson. It's a quare thing to me the way Jimmy runs after Hannah, and her showing him plain enough that she never had any regard for him.

Clutie John. 'Deed, Andrew, there's many a thing in the world is quarer nor that. It's a quare thing now for a man to be blowing wind into a bit of a pipe and it to be making tunes for him. That's quare if you like!

Sarah Ferguson. Ah, you're daft about that old whistle of yours! [*She hands a cup of tea to him*] Here, drink up that, and don't talk so much! I suppose I'll have to let you sleep in the loft the night?

Clutie John. Sure, that'll be a grand bed for me, lying on the hay.

Sarah Ferguson. I do believe you're not such a fool as you make out, Clutie! You've the fine knack of getting into people's houses and making them give you your

meals and a bed without them meaning to do it!

Clutie John. I don't try to make them do it, Mrs. Ferguson. I just come in the house and sit down. That's all I do.

Sarah Ferguson. Ay, that's all you do. If you did any more, they'd mebbe have to keep you for the rest of your life! Once you're settled down, it's hard to persuade you to get up again.

Clutie John. You're letting on you're vexed with me, Mrs. Ferguson, but sure I know rightly you're not. A woman that has as kind a heart as you have . . .

Sarah Ferguson. Ah, wheesht with your talk! Will I cut another piece for you?

Clutie John. Ay, if you please!

[She cuts a piece of bread and gives it to him]

Andrew Ferguson. I wonder, da, would you be willing to go up to Belfast to live? I think I could mebbe get a place in a linen office there, and I daresay Hannah might get work in a wareroom or a shop. Between the two of us, we could keep my ma and you rightly.

John Ferguson. I'd be as willing to go there as anywhere, son, if I have to quit out of this.

Andrew Ferguson. When I was thinking of going into the ministry, I got acquainted with a young fellow named M'Kinstry that was very well connected. His da kept a linen mill in Belfast, and I daresay he'd be willing to put a word in for me if I was to ask him.

John Ferguson. Ay.

Andrew Ferguson. I think I'll go up to Belfast on Saturday and see young M'Kinstry. I'll write a letter to him the night to tell him I'm coming, and I'll just let him know the position of things so that he can tell his da about me.

Sarah Ferguson [to ANDREW]. Will I pour you out a wee drop more tea, son?

Andrew Ferguson. Thank you, ma.

[She takes his cup and fills it, and then passes it back to him]

John Ferguson. Who knows but my health will be better in Belfast nor it has been here? I'm not sure, when I think of it, but the mists that lie on the hills at night are bad for me. They say there's a fine air in Belfast blowing up the Lough from the sea.

[There is a knock at the door]

Sarah Ferguson. There's some one at the door now. It'll either be Hannah or Jimmy. Clutie John, away and open it, will you?

[CLUTIE JOHN goes to the door and opens it. JAMES CAESAR steps in. The assured manner which he assumed when HANNAH accepted him has become more pronounced]

James Caesar. I'm later nor I expected to be. *[He turns to CLUTIE]* Here, Clutie, help me off with my coat, will you?

[CLUTIE JOHN helps him to take off his overcoat]

It's turned a bit cold the night! *[To CLUTIE]* Hang it up there on the rack, Clutie.

[CLUTIE does as he is bid, and then goes to his seat by the fire]

I thought it would be as well to wear my top-coat, for you get quare and damp coming up the loanie in the mist! *[He goes to the fire and rubs his hands in the warmth]* Where's Hannah?

Sarah Ferguson. She's out, Jimmy!

James Caesar. Out, is she? It's very late for her to be out! She'll have to keep better hours nor this when she's married, eh? *[His attempt to be jovial falls heavy]* Has she not had her supper yet?

Sarah Ferguson. No, not yet. We're expecting her in every while.

James Caesar. I hope she'll not be long. I want to discuss the wedding with her . . .

Sarah Ferguson. The wedding!

James Caesar. Ay. Sure, there's no sense in our waiting long, is there? If people's able to get married, they ought to get the ceremony over quick. That's what I think, Mrs. Ferguson. Och, listen to me calling you Mrs. Ferguson, just like a stranger! I ought to start calling you "Ma" to get into the way of it, or would you rather I called you "Mother"?

Sarah Ferguson [nervously]. I'm not particular, Jimmy.

James Caesar. Some people's quare and particular about a thing like that. They think it's common to say "ma" and "da," and they never let their children call them anything but "father" and "mother." I knew a family once up in Belfast that always called their parents "papa" and "mamma." It was quare and conceited of them—just as if they were English or anything like that.

John Ferguson. Jimmy, I want to say something to you!

James Caesar. Ay, John! [*Jovially*] I can't start calling you "da" or "papa" or anything else but John, can I? [*To Mrs. FERGUSON*]. Of course, I'm near dead of the drouth! If you could spare me a wee drop of tea! . . .

Sarah Ferguson [*rising and speaking hurriedly*]. Of course, Jimmy, I will. I don't know what I'm thinking about not to ask you to sit down to your supper. [*She goes to the dresser for a cup and saucer*] Draw a chair up to the table, will you, and sit down!

James Caesar. Ah, now, I don't want to be putting you to any inconvenience.

Sarah Ferguson. Sure, it's no bother at all. Just come and content yourself. I'm all throughother with the ups and downs we've had this day, and my manners is all shattered over the head of it. Sit down here.

James Caesar [*taking his place at the table*]. Thank you, ma.

Sarah Ferguson. Will you have soda-bread or wheaten?

James Caesar. Wheaten, if you please!

[*ANDREW FERGUSON rises from the table and goes to the side of the fire opposite to that on which CLUTIE JOHN is seated*]

Sarah Ferguson. Help yourself to anything you want.

James Caesar. Thank you! [*He bows his head*] Thank God for this meal, Amen! [*To JOHN FERGUSON*] I've been making plans in my head, John, about the future of the farm.

John Ferguson. Jimmy, I want to say something to you! . . .

James Caesar [*slightly impatient*]. Ay, but wait till I tell you about my plans! Now, how would it be if you were to let the land by itself, and you and the rest of you stay on in the house? Me and Hannah'll be getting married in a wee while, and there'll only be the three of you left . . .

John Ferguson. Jimmy! . . .

James Caesar. Now, let me get it all out before I forget any of it. Andrew could mebbe resume his studies for the ministry. I might be able to advance him the money for it.

Andrew Ferguson. That's a kindly thought, Jimmy!

James Caesar. Ah, I've often thought I would like to be related to a minister. It

looks well to be able to say the Reverend Mr. So-and-So is your brother-in-law, particular if he's a well-known man such as you might be yourself, Andrew. Or I was thinking if you didn't fancy the ministry any more, mebbe you'd come into the shop and learn the grocery! The fact is, betwixt ourselves, I'm thinking seriously of opening a branch establishment over at Ballymaclurg, and if I had you trained under me, Andrew, you'd do rightly as the manager of it.

John Ferguson. Jimmy, I'll never be able to thank you sufficient for your kindness . . .

James Caesar. Ah, don't mention it! Sure, it's a pleasure, and anyway it's in the family, you might say! I wonder what's keeping Hannah! Where is she at all?

John Ferguson. Jimmy . . . Hannah's changed her mind!

James Caesar. Changed her mind! What do you mean?

John Ferguson. She's changed her mind, Jimmy!

James Caesar [*getting up and going to him: the assured manner has dropped from him*]. Do you mean she doesn't want to marry me no more?

John Ferguson. Ay, that's what I mean.

James Caesar. But! . . . Ah, quit your coddling, for dear sake! [*He goes back to his seat and begins to eat again*] You've been letting Clutie John put you up to this—trying to scare me. I wouldn't wonder but Hannah's upstairs all the while, splitting her sides . . . [*He gets up and goes to the foot of the staircase and calls up it*] Hi, Hannah, are you there?

Clutie John. I never put them up to anything, Mr. Caesar. It's not my nature to do a thing like that.

James Caesar [*calling up the stairs*]. Come on down out of that, Hannah, and not be tormenting me!

John Ferguson. She's not there, Jimmy.

James Caesar [*coming back to the table*]. Are you in earnest, John?

John Ferguson. I am, Jimmy. I'm quare and sorry for you . . .

James Caesar. But she gave her promise to me an hour ago! You heard her yourself!

John Ferguson. I know, but she's changed her mind since.

James Caesar. What's come over her?

John Ferguson. I can't tell you, Jimmy. She just didn't feel that she could go on with the match. It's a thing that you can't explain, Jimmy.

James Caesar. But . . . the farm . . . and the mortgage!

John Ferguson. When I saw the way her mind was set, I told her to go up to Witherow's and tell him to foreclose!

James Caesar. But, man alive!

John Ferguson. That's the way of it, Jimmy. I'm heartsore about it, but it can't be helped, can it?

James Caesar [angrily]. Do you mean to sit there and tell me you're going to let her treat me like dirt beneath her feet after the way I've offered to help you?

John Ferguson. I can't force her to do things against her will, Jimmy. No good would come of the like of that either to her or to you.

James Caesar. I suppose you never thought of my position, John Ferguson? I've told all my neighbours already that Hannah and me are to be married, and now I'll have to tell them that she won't have me!

Andrew Ferguson. My da can't help it, can he, if Hannah doesn't want to marry you?

James Caesar. What'll Witherow say when he hears about it? My God, he'll be the first to know! [*He becomes wild with rage as this idea expands in his mind*] Had you no consideration at all, the whole pack of you? I was willing to cripple myself to get you out of your difficulty, and then you turn on me and affront me before the man I hate most in the world! That's kindness for you! That's the reward a man gets for being neighbourly!

John Ferguson. Ay, you may well complain, Jimmy! I'm not denying your right to do so. I'd have spared you from this if I could.

James Caesar. Can't you make her keep her promise to me? A man has the right to be respected by his own child, and if she doesn't obey you and do what you tell her, you should make her.

Andrew Ferguson. Would you marry a woman that doesn't want you?

James Caesar [fiercely]. I want her, don't I? What does it matter to me whether she wants me or not so long as I'm married to her? My heart's hungry for her!

[*His ferocity passes into complaint*] Don't I know rightly she doesn't want me? But what does that matter to me? I've loved her since she was a wee child, and I'd be happy with her if she was never to give me a kind look. Many and many a time, when the shop was closed, I went and sat out there in the fields and imagined her and me married together and living happy, us with two or three wee children, and them growing up fine and strong. I could see her them times walking about in a fine silk dress, and looking grand on it, and all the neighbours nudging each other and saying the fine woman she was and the well we must be getting on in the world for her to be able to dress herself that nice! I could hardly bear it when I used to meet her afterwards, and she hadn't hardly a civil word for me; but I couldn't keep out of her way for all that; and many's a time I run quick and dodged round corners so's I should meet her again and have the pleasure of looking at her. When she said she'd have me, I could feel big lumps rolling off me, and I was light-hearted and happy for all I knew she was only consenting to have me to save your farm, John. I had my heart's desire, and I never felt so like a man before! . . . And now! . . . [*He rests his head on the table and begins to sob*]

Sarah Ferguson [in anguish]. I can't bear to see a man crying! [*She goes to JIMMY*] Quit, Jimmy, son! It'll mebbe be all right in the end. Don't disturb yourself so much, man!

Andrew Ferguson [contemptuously]. There's no sense in going on that way!

John Ferguson. Don't speak to him, Andrew! Leave the man to his grief!

James Caesar [looking up, and addressing ANDREW]. I know rightly I'm making a poor show of myself, but I can't help it. Wouldn't anybody that's had the life that I've had do the same as me? You're right and fine, Andrew, and full of your talk, but wait till you've had to bear what I have, and you'll see then what you'll do when something good that you've longed for all your life comes to you and then is taken from you. [*He rises from the table, trying to recover himself and speak in an ordinary voice*] I'm sorry I bothered you all! I'll not trouble you with my company any longer. It'll be better for me to be

going nor to be here when she comes back. [He moves towards the door] I said some harsh words to you, John! . . .

John Ferguson. I'm not minding them, Jimmy. I know well the state you're in.

James Caesar. I'm sorry I said them to you, all the same. It was in anger I said them . . .

[CLUTIE JOHN starts up from his seat in the corner, and holds up his hand for silence]

Clutie John. Wheesht!

Sarah Ferguson. What is it, Clutie?

Clutie John. Wheesht, wheesht!

[He goes to the door and opens it, while the others stand staring at him. He listens for a moment or two, and then he darts swiftly into the darkness]

Sarah Ferguson. In the name of God, what ails the fellow?

Andrew Ferguson [going to the door]. He's heard something.

Sarah Ferguson [drawing a blind and peering out]. Oh, what is it?

Andrew Ferguson [looking out]. I can't see anything . . . Wait! [He pauses a moment] There's some one coming up the loanie. I hear steps . . .

James Caesar [coming to his side, and listening]. It's some one running!

Andrew Ferguson. Ay! . . . It's Hannah! [He shouts to his sister] What ails you, Hannah?

James Caesar. I hope nothing's happened to her.

Sarah Ferguson. She must have been scared or something.

[She goes to the door and stands beside CAESAR. ANDREW FERGUSON is heard outside speaking inquiries to his sister. Then CAESAR and MRS. FERGUSON come away from the door into the kitchen, and HANNAH, in a state of terrible agitation, appears in the doorway. She pauses wildly for a moment, glancing round the room without seeing anything because of sudden change from darkness to light]

Sarah Ferguson. Hannah, what ails you, dear?

[HANNAH goes quickly to her father and throws herself against his knees]

Hannah Ferguson. Da, da!

John Ferguson. What is it, daughter? What is it?

[ANDREW FERGUSON, followed by CLUTIE JOHN, returns to the kitchen. He closes the door]

Andrew Ferguson. What ails her? Has she hurt herself?

John Ferguson. Hannah!

[He tries to lift her face to his, but she resists him]

Hannah, what is it? Tell me, daughter!

Hannah Ferguson [brokenly]. Da, da, I can't! . . .

John Ferguson. You can't what, Hannah?

Hannah Ferguson. It's . . . it's fearful, da!

James Caesar. Has any one harmed her? Hannah, has any one harmed you? [To JOHN FERGUSON] She was at Witherow's, wasn't she? [Turning to the others] That's where she was—at Witherow's! [To HANNAH] Hannah, do you hear me, girl? Has any one harmed you? Was it Witherow?

Hannah Ferguson. I can't . . . can't . . .

James Caesar. You must tell us. [Looking wildly about him] My God, I'll go mad if any harm's happened to her!

Andrew Ferguson [taking hold of his arm and leading him away from HANNAH]. Quieten yourself, Jimmy. She'll tell us in a minute when she's herself again.

John Ferguson. Hannah, dear! Come closer to me, daughter! [He lifts her head from his knees and draws her up so that her face rests against his] Just keep quiet, daughter! No one'll harm you here. Keep quite quiet! [To JAMES CAESAR] She was always a wee bit afeard of the dark, for she has a great imagination, and she mebbe thought she saw something fearful in the night. Get her a wee sup of sweet milk, one of you!

[MRS. FERGUSON goes to get the milk for her]

It's mebbe nothing but fright. I've seen her as startled as this once before when she was a child.

[HANNAH gives a great sob, and starts a little]

There, daughter, you needn't be scared! You're safe here from any harm.

[MRS. FERGUSON brings a cup of milk to him]

Thank you, Sarah! Here, Hannah, drink a wee sup of this! It'll do you good!

Hannah Ferguson [clinging closer to him] Nq da, no!

John Ferguson. Ay, daughter, it'll help to steady you!

[He puts the cup to her lips, and she drinks some of the milk]

That's right! That's right! You'll have a wee drop more, now!

[She averts her head]

Ay, daughter, just have some more, and then you'll mebbe be quieter in yourself. *[He compels her to drink some more of the milk, and then he puts the cup away]* That'll do you a power of good! *[He draws her head down to his breast]* Just rest your head on me, daughter, and keep still!

Clutie John. She was crying bitter out there. She was running up the loanie when I found her, and she let a screech out of her when I touched her arm, and then she run that hard I couldn't keep pace with her. It must have been a fearful thing that scared her that way!

Sarah Ferguson. I hope to my goodness it's no more sorrow for us. We've had more nor our share already.

John Ferguson. Wheesht, wheesht, woman. Wheesht!

James Caesar. If Witherow's harmed her, I'll kill him. I will, so help me, God!

John Ferguson. Quit, quit! *[To HANNAH]* Are you better now, Hannah?

[She still sobs a little, but her agitation has subsided, and she is now able to speak more or less coherently]

Just tell me, daughter. What happened you?

Hannah Ferguson. Da, I'm ashamed! . . .

John Ferguson. Ashamed, daughter!

Sarah Ferguson. She said she was ashamed! Oh, my God!

John Ferguson. What are you ashamed of, daughter?

Hannah Ferguson. I . . . *[She relapses]* I can't tell you, da, I can't tell you!

James Caesar. Was it Witherow, Hannah?

John Ferguson. Don't bother her, Jimmy!

James Caesar. I know it was Witherow, I know it was him!

John Ferguson. Hannah! Look up, daughter!

Hannah Ferguson. Yes, da!

John Ferguson. Tell me about it!

Hannah Ferguson *[making an effort to control herself, now and then speaking brokenly]*. I went up to Witherow's farm,

the way you told me, and there were two people waiting to talk to him.

John Ferguson. Ay.

Hannah Ferguson. He kept me waiting till after he had done with them. I told him we couldn't pay the money and he was to foreclose, and then he began laughing at me and making a mock of . . . of Jimmy . . . *[She looks up and sees CAESAR and hesitates to finish her sentence]*

James Caesar. Was it me he made a mock of? *[To JOHN FERGUSON]* Ah, didn't I tell you what he would do? Didn't I, now? *[He turns to the others]* Didn't I, Mrs. Ferguson? . . .

John Ferguson. Go on, daughter!

Hannah Ferguson. He said he supposed it couldn't be helped, and I was just coming away when he said he would walk the length of the loanie with me, and I waited for him. *[Her voice grows feeble]* We were walking along, talking about one thing and another . . .

John Ferguson *[nervously]*. Ay, ay!

Hannah Ferguson. And he begun telling me what a fine girl I am, and wishing he could kiss me! . . .

James Caesar. God starve him!

Hannah Ferguson. And then he tried to kiss me, but I wouldn't let him. We were going over Musgrave's meadow together, and all of a sudden he put his arms round me and threw me down! . . . Oh, da, da! *[Her grief overcomes her again, and she buries her head against his breast and is unable to speak further]*

James Caesar. What did she say, John? What was it she said?

John Ferguson *[brokenly]*. I can't speak, Jimmy—I can't speak. Hannah, dear! *[He tries to comfort her]*

James Caesar. Did he wrong her? That's what I want to know!

Sarah Ferguson. Oh, will we never have comfort in the world! John, does she mean that he harmed her . . . *harmed* her? *[Wildly to the others]* One of you do something! Andrew! Jimmy!!

James Caesar. I've sworn many's a time to have his life and never done it. I was a poor, trembling creature, but I'll tremble no more! *[He goes to the door]* Good-night to you all!

John Ferguson. Where are you going, Jimmy?

James Caesar. I'm going—somewhere!

John Ferguson. Sit down, Jimmy.

James Caesar. It's no good you talking to me, John! [*He opens the door violently and goes out*]

John Ferguson. Andrew, go after him and bring him back. There's enough harm done already. Go and stop him, son!

[*ANDREW goes unwillingly to the door.*

He stands there looking up the dark loanie]

Andrew Ferguson. I can't see him!

John Ferguson. You must be able to see him. He can't be that far! Go after him, man, and bring him back here.

Andrew Ferguson. No, da, I won't. [*He shuts the door and returns to his seat*] The man has a right to be left to himself.

John Ferguson. Andrew! [*He tries to get up from his chair, but is prevented by HANNAH's weight*] Here, Sarah, take Hannah and put her to bed. Get up, daughter!

Hannah Ferguson [*clinging to him*]. Da, da!

John Ferguson. Ay, daughter, ay! God's scourged us hard, and it isn't easy to bear. We must just . . . just try and be patient. [*Kissing her*] Go to your ma, dear, and let her take care of you!

Sarah Ferguson. Come to your bed, Hannah!

[*HANNAH's anguish unbalances her, and she becomes hysterical, and stands clinging to her father and weeping bitterly*]

John Ferguson [*comforting her*]. You must control yourself, daughter. Go with your ma, now, like a good girl. Take her, Sarah!

[*MRS. FERGUSON leads her daughter towards the stairs. They go out*]

Andrew Ferguson. I hope Jimmy'll kill him.

John Ferguson [*weakly*]. Son, son, don't talk that way!

Andrew Ferguson. I can't help it, da. He ought to be killed. He's not fit to live.

John Ferguson. Are you setting yourself up to judge God's work?

Andrew Ferguson. An eye for an eye, da, and a tooth for a tooth!

John Ferguson. That's not the spirit that lives now, son! That's the spirit that was destroyed on the Cross. If a man does an injury to you, and you injure him back, you're as bad as he is. You have your own work to do in the world, and you must leave

God to do His; it's His work to judge, not ours! [*His utterance exhausts him a little, and he staggers back into his chair. His voice changes to a pleading note*] Ah, Andrew, son, don't never talk that way again! I meant you for the ministry, to teach people how to live for God! You can't go into the ministry now, son, but you can teach people just the same, just the same! I would rather you were dead nor hear you speak about Jimmy Caesar the way you're doing . . . [*He gets up from his chair and goes to his son, taking him by the shoulder*] Will you not go out and look for him, son? He has suffered enough, poor man, without him damning his soul!

Andrew Ferguson. He can bear God's strokes as well as we can!

John Ferguson. Your heart's bitter, son! I wish I could go! [*He staggers towards the door*] I haven't the strength I used to have . . . Andrew, will you not do as I bid you?

Andrew Ferguson. No, da, I won't interfere between them.

John Ferguson. I must go myself, then. I must try and find him . . .

[*MRS. FERGUSON comes down the stairs into the kitchen*]

Sarah Ferguson. John!

John Ferguson. Ay, woman!

Sarah Ferguson. Hannah wants you. She'll not be quiet without you near her.

John Ferguson. I can't go up to her yet, Sarah. I'm going out to look for Jimmy Caesar. I can't let him be wandering about wild in the night. If he finds Witherow, he'll mebbe do him an injury. [*He turns towards the door again*] Andrew won't go, so I must. I can't let the man destroy himself.

Sarah Ferguson. What way's that to be talking and you the sick you are? Is it your death you're wanting? And no coat on or nothing. [*To her son*] Andrew, think shame of yourself to be letting your da go out in the dark and damp! [*To her husband*] You must come to Hannah. She won't keep still without you! [*To ANDREW*] You go and look for Jimmy, Andrew. The poor creature's near distracted mad, and dear knows in that state he might do something fearful.

Andrew Ferguson [*sullenly*]. I'm not going, ma. I've told my da that already.

Sarah Ferguson. Ah, aren't you head-

strong? [*To her husband*] Come up to Hannah first, John!

John Ferguson. She must wait till I come back. It's Jimmy Caesar that's in the greatest danger now. I'll come to her when I get back, tell her!

Sarah Ferguson. You'll rue this night, the pair of you, but you must have your own way, I suppose!

John Ferguson. Give me my coat, woman!

[*MRS. FERGUSON goes to get his coat for him*]

Andrew, will you not come with me and help me to find him?

Andrew Ferguson. I'll not budge out of the door, da. I wouldn't lift a finger to stop him from doing anything he wants to do.

[*MRS. FERGUSON returns to the kitchen carrying a jacket, a topcoat, and a muffler*]

It's no business of mine to interfere between them.

Sarah Ferguson [*helping her husband into his coat*]. Muffle yourself up well, John. It's cold the night.

John Ferguson. Ay, Sarah, thank you. [*He puts the muffler round his throat*]

Andrew Ferguson. I only hope Jimmy'll have the manhood to kill Witherow!

John Ferguson [*in pain*]. Wheesht wheesht, son! Wheesht, adear! [*He recovers himself, and turns to his wife*] Tell Hannah where I'm gone, Sarah! That'll mebbe keep her quiet till I get back! [*He opens the door*] I'll come as soon as I can! [*He goes out, closing the door behind him*]

Sarah Ferguson. It'll kill him, this night's work! Andrew, how can you stand there and see your da going out in the wet and dark, and you knowing well the sick and feeble he is!

Andrew Ferguson. I can't stop him from going, can I?

Sarah Ferguson. You could have gone yourself.

Andrew Ferguson [*turning to her and speaking fiercely*]. I tell you I don't want to stop Jimmy from killing Witherow if he's going to do it. It's right that he should kill him. The man's bad from head to foot. Everything about him shows that! It isn't only the way he's treated us, but others too. You've told me yourself many's a time, and my da's told me too, of the cuts

and insults Jimmy's had to bear from him! Isn't this greater nor the lot of them put together? Hasn't Jimmy a right to turn on him now if he never had the right before? I don't care what my da says! Jimmy has the right to turn on him and kill him if he can.

Sarah Ferguson [*bewildered by the catastrophe in which she is involved*]. I'm all moidhered by it. I don't understand what's happening. Your da says it's the will of God, but I... I can't make it out... [*She goes towards the stairs*] I'll mebbe not come down again, Andrew. Good-night, son!

Andrew Ferguson. Good-night, ma!

[*MRS. FERGUSON goes upstairs. ANDREW walks across the room and opens the door. He looks out for a moment or two. Then he shuts the door and walks back to the fireplace*]

Clutie John. Your da's a forgiving man, Andrew!

Andrew Ferguson [*absently*]. Eh?

Clutie John. I say, your da's a forgiving man!

Andrew Ferguson [*carelessly*]. Oh, ay. Ay! [*He walks across the room and back again*]

Clutie John. You're not a forgiving man, are you, Andrew?

[*ANDREW sits down at the table. He does not reply to CLUTIE JOHN*]

Clutie John. You're not a forgiving man are you, Andrew? [*He gets up and comes to the table*] You wouldn't forgive till seventy times seven, would you?

Andrew Ferguson [*impatiently*]. Ah, quit!

Clutie John. Your da has a quare good nature. He always says you should turn the other cheek to the man that harms you. That's a great spirit to have, that, isn't it?

Andrew Ferguson [*who has not been listening*]. Eh? What's that you say?

Clutie John. I was talking about your da, Andrew, and him having the great fine spirit of forgiveness in him.

Andrew Ferguson [*indifferently*]. Oh, ay! Ay!

Clutie John. I could never be as forgiving as your da if I lived to be a thousand years old. [*He pauses for a moment, and then says eagerly*] Will I play something to you?

[*ANDREW does not make any movement*]

Are you not listening to me?

Andrew Ferguson [crossly]. Ah, what is it? What's the matter with you?

Clutie John. Will I not play something to you? It's a great comfort when you're in trouble to hear a man playing a tune . . .

Andrew Ferguson [sharply]. Quit blethering!

Clutie John [going back to his seat at the fire]. I was only wondering could I do anything to please you, Andrew? But I'll keep still and quiet. I'll not disturb you at all.

[*They sit in silence for a few moments*]

Clutie John. He's a bad man, that man Witherow! That's what he is! He has a sour nature in him. Whenever he meets me, he makes a mock of me and says, "When are they going to put you in the asylum, Clutie?" Sometimes he hits me with his stick or a whip mebbe. He done that the day there forwent your own door, Andrew! He couped me into the hedge and near broke my whistle on me. That shows the bad-natured man he is to be hurting a poor fellow like myself that has to beg his bread from door to door!

Andrew Ferguson. Hold your tongue, will you?

Clutie John [meekly]. All right, Andrew! I was only saying what he done to me, but, sure, it doesn't matter what he does to the like of me, a poor senseless fellow that wanders the world with a whistle! It's quare and different, Andrew, when he does harm to a girl like Hannah . . .

Andrew Ferguson [turning to him and speaking quickly]. Ay, it is different, Clutie! You're right there. My sister is the finest girl in the County Down . . .

Clutie John [eagerly]. Ay, she is, Andrew. She is in sang. There isn't her equal in the province of Ulster. There is not. I've oftentimes heard people talking about her, and saying what a fine match she'll make for some man, and one time I tried to make up a song about her to be singing on the roads, but I couldn't do it with any satisfaction to myself. I'm no hand at making up poetry. She's a fine young girl and a great companion she'll be to any one.

Andrew Ferguson. It's only a fine man that's fit for her.

Clutie John. That's true! [*He gets up and*

comes to the table and leans across it] It would never have done if she'd married Jimmy Caesar. The mountains can never consort with the hills.

Andrew Ferguson. No! No!! I wasn't best pleased about the match when I heard of it.

Clutie John. He's not much of a man, Jimmy Caesar!

Andrew Ferguson. No, he isn't indeed!

Clutie John. He's a poor-natured man, that's what he is. He'd be worse nor Witherow if he had the pluck. Mebbe he is worse nor him, for he has no pluck at all. He's a mean man.

Andrew Ferguson. I daresay you're right. [*He goes to the fire and stands with his back to it*]

Clutie John. Ay, I am. He'd beat you on the ground that lad would, but he would run away from you if you were to stand up to him. That's the kind he is.

Andrew Ferguson. Ah, well, he's had a poor life of it.

Clutie John. He'd have been mean-natured whatever kind of a life he had, Andrew! I've seen men like him before in my time. They think I'm a fool and see nothing, but when I'm playing my whistle, Andrew, I see them when they're not thinking I'm looking at them—and there's plenty of them, high up and low down, that are crawling when they're at your feet and are ready to crawl when they're standing up. That's the way of them. A man like Jimmy Caesar would be a poor defender for Hannah!

Andrew Ferguson. Mebbe he would!

Clutie John. I'd be afeard to trust myself to him if I was in need of a person to take care of me. I would so.

Andrew Ferguson. Ah, you can take care of yourself! Quit talking now, or if you can't keep quiet, go out to the hayloft and talk to yourself. [*He goes half-way across the room and then returns to the fire. He stands with his face to it*]

Clutie John [after a pause]. I wonder will Jimmy Caesar kill Witherow?

Andrew Ferguson. What makes you wonder that?

Clutie John. I was just wondering! [*He turns towards the door*] I'd better be going to my bed. It was kind of your ma to give me leave to sleep in the loft. It'll be nice

and comfortable to stretch myself out on the hay.

Andrew Ferguson. Ay. Good-night.

Clutie John. Good-night to you, Andrew. [*He looks back to his seat*] Ah, dear bless us, I was near forgetting my whistle! [*He goes to his seat and picks up the whistle*] It's not a great deal to look at, but it can play a grand tune! [*He puts it in his pocket*] I wouldn't be surprised but Caesar doesn't do it!

Andrew Ferguson [*abstractedly*]. Doesn't do what?

Clutie John. Kill Witherow.

Andrew Ferguson. What makes you think that?

Clutie John. It's the way of him to be talking and not doing.

Andrew Ferguson. Ah, man, but this is different.

Clutie John. You can't help your nature, Andrew. No one can. Jimmy Caesar's always been afeard of Henry Witherow, and it's likely he always will be. He can't help it, God be good to him!

Andrew Ferguson [*thinking this over for a second, and then turning away contemptuously*]. Ah, you don't know what you're talking about!

Clutie John. No. No, Andrew, that's true! I have no sense in my head at all. I've oftentimes been told that. Good-night again to you, Andrew!

Andrew Ferguson. Good-night!

Clutie John [*before he reaches the door*]. Mind you, Jimmy Caesar'll mean to kill him! I daresay he will. And mebbe he would have killed him if he had been standing forment him that minute, with his back turned, but . . . he had to go out and find him, Andrew! It's a good step from here to Witherow's farm, and he had to get a gun . . . or something. You have time to think when you're going that length.

Andrew Ferguson. Ay.

Clutie John. I wouldn't doubt but he went home. I daresay he's lying huddled up in his bed this minute, Andrew, and your poor old da hunting for him in the dark, and your sister up there weeping her eyes out . . .

Andrew Ferguson. Ah, quit, man, quit! You're tormenting me with your talk.

Clutie John. A fine girl like Hannah to be depending on Jimmy Caesar for a man . . .

Andrew Ferguson. Go on with you, go on!

Clutie John. And him mebbe at home all the time, snuggled up in his bed!

Andrew Ferguson. What do you mean, Clutie? What are you trying to prove?

Clutie John. Prove? Me? Sure, I couldn't prove anything if I was paid to do it. I'm no hand at proving things. That's why I haven't got any sense.

Andrew Ferguson [*going to him and taking hold of his shoulder*]. What's all this talk about Jimmy Caesar mean? You have some meaning in your mind!

Clutie John. I wish I had, but sure I'll never be right, never. I'll always be quare.

Andrew Ferguson [*turning away from him in disgust*]. Och, away with you! [*He goes back to the fire, standing with his face to it*] You have as much talk as Jimmy Caesar himself!

[*CLUTIE JOHN stands still for a few moments. Then he steps lightly across the floor to where ANDREW is sitting and taps him on the shoulder*]

Clutie John. Andrew!

Andrew Ferguson. What ails you now?

Clutie John. Supposing Jimmy Caesar doesn't kill Witherow?

Andrew Ferguson. Well? Well, well?

Clutie John. That 'u'd be fearful, wouldn't it? Can't you picture Witherow sitting up there in his hungry house laughing to himself . . .

Andrew Ferguson. My God, Clutie!

Clutie John. And mebbe saying he'll look out for Hannah again!

Andrew Ferguson. Aw, my God, my God!

Clutie John. And making a mock of Jimmy Caesar, the way he always does, and calling him an old Jenny-Jo that'll stand by and let another man do harm to his girl . . .

Andrew Ferguson. Ah, wheesht with you, wheesht!

Clutie John. And telling people about it! Ay, telling people about it! You can see him with his great jaw hanging down and him roaring with laughter and telling them all in Jefferson public-house on the fair-day!

Andrew Ferguson. Ay, indeed, that's what he'd do!

Clutie John. That's what he done over the head of Martha Foley that had the child

to him. Didn't I hear him myself, telling them all about it, and them splitting their sides and calling him the great lad and the gallous boy and the terrible man for women? . . . And then mebbe him to be telling them how your da, that's near his death, went out to try and stop Jimmy from killing him, and all the while your da was tumbling over the dark fields Jimmy was lying trembling with fright in his bed, afeard to move . . .

Andrew Ferguson. He'd never be such a collie as that, Clutie. He couldn't for shame.

Clutie John [coming nearer to him]. If I was Hannah's brother, I'd make sure!

Andrew Ferguson. Make sure! What do you mean?

Clutie John. Ah, what do I mean? Sure, I don't know what I'm saying half my time! I'm all throughother. I don't know what I mean, Andrew; I don't know. God reward you, and I'll bid you good-night. I'll go up to the loft and play a while to myself. Sure, I'll disturb no one there but the cows mebbe in the byre, and God knows the poor beasts 'll not complain if a poor fellow like myself has a small diversion. And when I lie down and stretch myself in the hay, I can be thinking mebbe Jimmy Caesar is lying in a fine warm bed, and be pitying your da that's out looking for him, and be cursing Henry Witherow that's mebbe laughing now and making up great stories to be telling on the fair-day . . .

Andrew Ferguson. Are you trying to drive me demented?

Clutie John. Wheesht, wheesht!

[MRS. FERGUSON comes down the stairs]

Sarah Ferguson. Will you not keep quiet, the pair of you? I'm trying hard to get Hannah asleep, but the clatter you're making would wake the dead! Is your da not back yet, Andrew?

Andrew Ferguson. No, ma, not yet!

Sarah Ferguson [picking up JIMMY CAESAR's coat]. Dear bless us, Jimmy left his coat behind him. He'll be sure to get his death of cold, for he always had a delicate chest. [She puts the coat aside] I wish you'd go and find your da, Andrew, and bring him home. It's no time of the night for him to be wandering about in the cold air. Hannah'll never rest without him near

her. Will you not go now and find him, son?

Andrew Ferguson. All right, ma!

Sarah Ferguson. That's a good son. Tell him to come home as quick as he can. Clutie John'll stay here while you look for him. [She listens for a moment] That's Hannah crying again! I can't leave her for a minute but she begins lamenting . . .

[She goes hurriedly upstairs again. ANDREW goes to the door and looks out. He is followed by CLUTIE JOHN]

Clutie John. Look, Andrew, there's a light in Witherow's window. Do you see it over there on the side of the hill? It shines down the valley a long way. Do you see it, Andrew?

Andrew Ferguson. Ay.

Clutie John. It doesn't look as if Jimmy'd got there, does it? The light's still shining.

Andrew Ferguson. He might be there for all that.

Clutie John. Mebbe! Ay, mebbe! Well, I'll away on now to my bed. The night's turned sharp, and I feel tired and sleepy. [He stands in the doorway, gazing up at the sky] There's a lot of wee stars out the night, Andrew, but no moon.

Andrew Ferguson. Ay.

Clutie John. I oftentimes think it must be quare and lonely up in the sky. Good-night to you, Andrew!

Andrew Ferguson. Good-night, Clutie.

[CLUTIE JOHN goes out. ANDREW FERGUSON stands still, watching the light in WITHEROW'S window. Then a great anger goes over him. He mutters something to himself, and turns suddenly into the kitchen. He takes down the gun and, after examining it to see if it is loaded, he goes out. In a few moments SARAH FERGUSON is heard calling to him from the top of the stairs]

Sarah Ferguson. Andrew! Andrew!! Are you there? [She comes down part of the staircase and looks over the banisters] Are you there, Andrew? Clutie! [She comes into the kitchen and looks about her] Clutie! [She goes to the foot of the stairs and calls up to HANNAH] It's all right, Hannah, dear! Andrew's away to fetch your da! [She goes to the door and looks out for a few moments. Then she closes the door and goes up the stairs again]

ACT THREE

It is early in the morning of the following day. The room is bright and cheery because a fine sunshine pours in at the window and open door. There is nothing in the appearance of the kitchen to indicate that any unusual thing has happened; the gun is again suspended over the fire-place. MRS. FERGUSON is bending over the fire, settling a kettle on the coals and turf, when her husband comes into the kitchen from the staircase.

Sarah Ferguson. Is that you, John?

John Ferguson. Ay. [*He seats himself by the fire*] Where's Andrew?

Sarah Ferguson. He's away out to the byre. Will I call him?

John Ferguson. Ay, do!

[*MRS. FERGUSON goes to the door and calls out "Andrew! Andrew!" ANDREW is heard to shout, "What do you want, ma?" and MRS. FERGUSON replies, "Your da wants you a minute!" ANDREW shouts back, "I'll be in in a wee while." MRS. FERGUSON returns to the fire*]

Sarah Ferguson. He says he'll be in in a minute. Did you get your rest, John?

John Ferguson. I couldn't sleep at all; I lay still and closed my eyes, but my mind was working all the time. I kept on wondering where Jimmy went to last night. I suppose no one has come up the loanie with news?

Sarah Ferguson. There's been no one next or near this place this morning but ourselves and Clutie John. I gave him his breakfast and sent him packing. He was in a quare wild mood, that lad, and could hardly contain himself for excitement.

John Ferguson. I daresay he was greatly disturbed in his mind after what happened yesterday. Them people is quare and easily excited. I wish Andrew would come! Is Hannah up yet?

Sarah Ferguson. Indeed I don't know. I didn't call her this morning. She was a long while getting her sleep, and so I just let her lie on. She'll be all the better for the rest.

John Ferguson. Ay. I can't make out where Jimmy went to last night. I thought mebbe he'd go straight to Witherow from

here, and so I went there first, but I didn't see him.

Sarah Ferguson. Did you see Witherow?

John Ferguson. Ay. I warned him about Jimmy.

Sarah Ferguson. You warned him?

John Ferguson. Ay.

Sarah Ferguson. And you never laid a finger on him?

John Ferguson. No.

Sarah Ferguson. Well, indeed, I can't make you out, John! There's a man's harmed your daughter, and you didn't as much as lift your hand to him! You went and warned him about Jimmy! . . . Oh, John, I can't understand you! It doesn't seem right someway to be acting like that!

John Ferguson. God's Word says I must love my enemies, Sarah. That is my guide in all I do. It's hard to obey that commandment, and when I was standing there in front of Witherow, I was tempted to take a hold of him and do him an injury . . . but I resisted the temptation, and I did what God bid me. I wasn't able to love him, but I warned him. I could do no more than that . . . but God 'll mebbe understand!

Sarah Ferguson [*sighing*]. Ah, well! It's a quare way to look at things. If any one was to hurt me, I'd do my best to hurt them back, and hurt them harder nor they hurt me. That would learn them!

John Ferguson. Would it? Men's been hitting back since the beginning of the world, but hitting back has learned no one anything but hatred and bitterness.

Sarah Ferguson. What did you do after you saw Witherow?

John Ferguson. I went down to Jimmy's shop, but he wasn't there. I dundhered on the door, but I could get no answer. Matt Kerr put his head out of his window, but he couldn't tell me a thing about Jimmy. I didn't know what to do after that! I wandered about in the dark for a while, and then I went back to the shop, but he still wasn't there! I was feeling tired, and I sat down for a wee while, thinking mebbe Jimmy would turn up while I was waiting, but he didn't, and so I came home.

Sarah Ferguson. You might have got your death of cold sitting there in the damp. It's a wonder to me you never knocked against Andrew!

John Ferguson. Ay, it is, but sure it's easy to miss people when it isn't light.

[*ANDREW FERGUSON enters by the door.*

There is a sombre look on his face. It is not the darkness of a man who is horrified by his own deed, but the darkness of a man who has set himself willingly to do some desperate work that must be done.]

Andrew Ferguson. You were wanting me, da?

John Ferguson. Ay, Andrew! [*regarding his son closely*] You're looking tired, son!

Andrew Ferguson. I am tired, but sure we all are. Da, you ought not to have got up this morning. You're not strong, and you must nearly be worn out.

John Ferguson. I couldn't rest, son. Andrew, I want you to go and inquire about Jimmy Caesar. I'll not be easy in my mind till I see him safe and sound. I feel my own responsibility, son. I'll admit to you I was hoping Hannah 'd marry him, and I didn't discourage her from saying "yes" to him when he asked her, for all I knew she was only doing it for the farm. I knew the girl couldn't bear him, but I pretended to myself it would all come right in the end. I . . . I love this house, Andrew! That's the excuse I have for not being honest with Hannah . . .

Sarah Ferguson. Ah, sure, you left it to her own free will.

John Ferguson. Ay, I tried to salve my conscience that way, but I said it in a way that showed plain what my desire was. If I had been firm, there would have been none of this bother now. You understand me, son, don't you? I feel I won't be happy till I see Jimmy safe and sound from harm, because I put him in danger. God knows what would happen if he was to meet Witherow in the temper he was in last night.

Andrew Ferguson. I daresay he's all right, da!

John Ferguson. I'd be glad if you'd go all the same and search for him, Andrew.

Sarah Ferguson. Just go to please him, Andrew. His mind's upset about Jimmy, and there'll be no contenting him till he sees him.

Andrew Ferguson. It'll put the work on the farm behind, da . . .

John Ferguson. That doesn't matter, son.

Andrew Ferguson. . . . but I'll go to please you!

John Ferguson. Thank you, son!

Andrew Ferguson. There's no need for you to be uneasy about him, though. You may be sure Jimmy's come to no harm. We all know rightly the kind he is. Mebbe he's lying snug in his bed this minute, moaning and groaning, and saying what he'd do to Witherow one of these days, but you know as well as you're living he'll never do it.

John Ferguson. I'd leifer he was a collie a thousand times over nor have him take a man's life.

Andrew Ferguson. Even after what Witherow's done?

John Ferguson. Ay, son. Witherow will have to make his answer to God, and God will deal justly with him. We can't do that. No one can do justice to a man that's done an injury to them. We'd be thinking all the time of our trouble and wanting revenge. We wouldn't be striving hard, the way God would, to understand everything.

Andrew Ferguson. There's no need to be striving to understand everything, da. It's a plain matter that a child can understand. The man done wrong, and he has a right to suffer for it.

John Ferguson. Ay, son, he'll suffer for it, but that's the work of his Maker, and not the work of Jimmy Caesar or you or me or any man. You're wrong, Andrew, when you say there's nothing to understand. There's everything to understand. There's the man himself to understand. Do you think that Jimmy Caesar can judge Henry Witherow when he doesn't know him as God knows him?

Andrew Ferguson [*impatiently*]. I've no time or patience for that kind of talk. If Jimmy Caesar . . . killed him . . . he was right to kill him . . . only I don't suppose he did.

John Ferguson. Don't you see now, Andrew, that you're not fit to judge Henry Witherow either? You can't judge a man if you have anger in your heart against him. You must love him before you can do justly by him.

Andrew Ferguson. Och, quit, da!

John Ferguson. And that's what God does, Andrew! God's something that sees inside you and knows every bit of you and never has no spite against you. Do you under-

stand me, son? He judges you, but He doesn't punish you. He just gives knowledge to you so that you see yourself as He sees you, and that's your punishment, Andrew, if you've done wrong. It's knowing yourself as God knows you that hurts you harder nor anything else in the world. Do you think Henry Witherow 'll be happy when he sees himself with God's eyes? I wouldn't be that man on the last day for the wealth of the world! . . . I'm all moidhered, Andrew, and I'm a poor hand at saying what's in my mind, but I know well that if Henry Witherow wronged me a thousand times more nor he has, I'd be doing God's will if I knelt down and kissed his feet.

Andrew Ferguson. I don't understand that kind of religion.

Sarah Ferguson. Here's some one coming up the loanie. I can hear their steps. [She goes to the door as she speaks] It's Jimmy!

John Ferguson. Jimmy Caesar?

Sarah Ferguson. Ay.

John Ferguson. Oh, thank God, thank God, he's come at last!

[JAMES CAESAR enters. The look of assurance has completely gone, and so, too, has some of the meanness. He has the look of a man who has suffered great shame and humiliation, and although he feels mean, he does not look so mean as he did at the beginning of the play]

Sarah Ferguson. Come in, Jimmy, come in! Sure, we're all right and glad to see you again!

John Ferguson [going to him and wringing his hand]. Ay, Jimmy, we are, indeed. I'm glad this minute to see you safe from harm. Sit down, man!

[He leads CAESAR to a chair, and CAESAR sits down]

You must be worn out.

[JAMES CAESAR glances about the room for a moment. Then he bows his head on the table and begins to cry hysterically]

Ay, man, you'll want to cry after the trouble you've had.

Andrew Ferguson [contemptuously]. My God, what a man!

John Ferguson. It's the reaction, son, that's what it is. He can't help himself. Nobody could.

Sarah Ferguson. A drink of tea 'll do him

a world of good. The kettle's on, and I'll have the tea wet in no time at all. [She goes to CAESAR and pats him on the back] There, there, Jimmy, keep your heart up! Sure, we all know the troubles you've had to bear. Just put a good face on it, and you'll be as happy as you like.

James Caesar. I'm a disgraced man!

John Ferguson. No, no, no, Jimmy!

James Caesar [raising his head]. Ay, I am, John. I'm a disgraced man! I heard what Andrew said to you a minute ago, and he was right. "My God," he said, "what a man!"

Sarah Ferguson. Ah, sure, Andrew didn't mean it, Jimmy. Don't be paying no heed to him.

Andrew Ferguson [angrily]. I did mean it.

John Ferguson. That's poor comfort, Andrew, to be offering to a broken man. I'd be ashamed to say that to any one.

James Caesar [as if eager to make little of himself]. But it's true, John, for all that. I've failed another time.

John Ferguson. It was God that checked you, Jimmy.

James Caesar. I went out of this house last night with my mind set on killing Witherow. If I'd met him in the loanie I'd 'a' throttled him there and then . . .

John Ferguson. I'm thankful you didn't meet him!

James Caesar [rambling on] . . . I was near demented with rage, and I hardly knew what I was doing. I started off for his farm. I could see the light in his front room shining down the glen, and it drew me towards it. I was that mad I didn't care what I done. I scrambled through the hedges and tore my hands and face with the thorns. Look at the cuts on my hands! [He holds out his hands for inspection]

John Ferguson. Ay, ay.

James Caesar. But I didn't care what happened to me. I felt nothing but the desire to get Witherow dead. I went across the fields, tumbling over stooks of corn, and slipping in puddles and drains till I come near the farm, and then I remembered I had nothing to kill him with . . .

Andrew Ferguson [sneering]. Ha!

James Caesar [turning to ANDREW]. I'm no match for him, Andrew, and if I'd gone into the house then, he'd have thrown me into the yard before I could have lifted

a finger to him. [*Insisting on his weakness*] I haven't the strength, Andrew, and I've a poor spirit. It wouldn't have been a fair fight if I'd gone in then, and me with no weapon, would it, Andrew? Would it, John? I hadn't even a sally rod in my hands!

Sarah Ferguson. He's stronger nor you by a good piece, Jimmy.

James Caesar. Yes, Mrs. Ferguson! That's what I said to myself. I said, "I'll have no chance against him if I go without a weapon!" That's what I said to myself. I made up my mind I'd go back to the shop to get my gun, and then I'd come back again to the farm and I'd shoot him dead.

John Ferguson. Aw, horrible, horrible.

Andrew Ferguson. And why didn't you go back again?

James Caesar [*miserably*]. You've guessed right, Andrew. I never went near the place again. I got to the shop and I went in quietly and got the gun, and then I come out again. I had hardly got across the doorstep when I began to feel afeard, and I could feel the gun shaking in my hands as I gripped it. I went a bit of the way along the road, and I kept thinking some one was watching me, and then all of a sudden I started to run, and I run and I run till I come to the planting. I went in among the trees, and before I knew where I was I tripped over something on the ground and the gun went off in my hands. I was scared of my life for fear any one would hear it, and I got up and left the gun on the ground, and I run on through the trees like a wild thing till I could run no more. Then I crawled in under a whin-bush, and I hid there till this morning. I lay there cursing myself for a collie, and trying to stir myself up to go and kill him in the daylight . . . but I couldn't do it. I kept on making excuses. That's the sort of me, John! I'm always imagining myself doing grand things, and seeing people clapping me and making speeches about me, and printing things in the papers because of my greatness and my gallantry; but if a cow was to make a run at me in the fields, I'd be near scared to death of it. It's bad enough, Andrew, to know that other people are ashamed of you, but it's hell to be ashamed of yourself, the way I am this minute, and it's hell to have dreams of

yourself doing big things, and you knowing rightly you'll never have the pluck to do a wee thing, let alone a big one.

John Ferguson. There's many a thing that a lad like Andrew might think was big, but it's quare and small.

James Caesar. It's kind of you to talk the way you do, John, but it's poor comfort to a man that knows he's as poor-spirited as myself. If Hannah was married on me now, I feel I would leave her in the lurch if she needed my help any time. That's the way of me, and I knew it well last night when I was hiding under the whin-bush. I'm not like you, John Ferguson, that has no hatred in your heart, and can forgive a man that does an injury to you. I'm full of hate, and I want to hurt them that hurts me, but I haven't the courage to do it.

Andrew Ferguson. Well, there's no use in sitting here talking about it.

James Caesar. No, Andrew, there isn't. I come here this morning to excuse myself to Hannah and all of you. I thought that was the least I could do.

John Ferguson. No, no, Jimmy, no, no! I'm right and glad you didn't harm Witherow. I'd have been sore-hearted if you had.

Sarah Ferguson. He went out to search for you last night, Jimmy.

James Caesar. Who? John?

Sarah Ferguson. Ay.

Andrew Ferguson. He searched the place for you. A sick man went out to try and prevent a strong, able-bodied man from doing what he ought to have done; and while the sick man was wearing himself out with the search, the strong man was hiding underneath a whin-bush in mortal fear of his life! [*His voice grows in anger and contempt as he speaks*]

James Caesar [*miserably*]. Oh, my God, my God!

John Ferguson. Wheesht, Andrew, wheesht! Jimmy, man, it's not like the thing for you to give way in that fashion! Control yourself, man! I'm as happy this minute as ever I've been in my life, because I know God's saved you from sinning your soul with a murder. I'm proud to think you wouldn't kill Witherow . . .

James Caesar [*in a misery of self-abasement*]. But I'm not saved from sin, John. I didn't leave Witherow alone because I didn't want to kill him. I did want to kill

him. I left him alone because I was afraid to touch him. My mind's the same now as it was when I went out of this house last night with murder in my heart. I want Witherow to be dead. I'd be glad this minute if some one came in the door there and told me he was dead. But I'd be afraid to lay a finger on him myself. That's the cowardliest thing of all, to want to commit a sin and not have the courage to do it. Do you think God'll be gratified when he thinks I didn't kill Witherow because I was too big a collie to do it?

Sarah Ferguson. Well, quit talking about it, anyway. Make yourself content while I get you a bite to eat.

James Caesar. I couldn't taste it. It 'ud choke me.

Sarah Ferguson. Now, a drop of tea never choked no one. The kettle's boiling, and it'll not take me a minute to make a cup of good warm tea for you. You must be perished with the cold, and you lying out on the damp grass all night. Just content yourself while I spread the table. [*She sets about preparing the meal*]

James Caesar [*in whom confession has now grown to something like a craving*]. I know rightly you have contempt for me, Andrew.

[*ANDREW stands at the window with his back to the others. He does not answer*]

I know you have. Anybody would. [*To JOHN FERGUSON*] Hannah'll have the quare contempt for me, too. There'll be plenty will, and they'll be pointing at me and making remarks about me. It'll be quare and hard for me to hold up my head again after this. It will, in sang. [*His voice changes its note slightly as he begins to speculate on his conduct*] You know, it's quare the way things turn out! Yesterday, after Hannah said she'd have me, I was having the great notions of myself and her. I imagined myself prospering greatly, and Andrew here doing well in the branch I was going to open at Ballymaclurg, and then I thought to myself I'd mebbe get made a magistrate . . .

Andrew Ferguson [*scornfully*]. Ha! Ha, ha!

James Caesar. Well, Andrew, there's many that's not so well reared as myself that are made magistrates this day, and can send fellows like Clutie John to jail for a month

and more for being without visible means of subsistence . . .

Andrew Ferguson. Ay, indeed, that sort of a job would suit you rightly! You could be doing an injury to other people without running any risk yourself! By my sang, Jimmy, you ought to be a magistrate! Mebbe, if you were one now, you'd fine Witherow forty shillings for what he done to Hannah! [*In great fury*] Ah, you make me feel sick! I'll go out in the air a while and be quit of you. I'm near stifled in here! [*He goes out violently*]

James Caesar. There you are, John! That's the kind of contempt I'll have to thole from people after this. Hannah's tongue is bitterer nor Andrew's and she'll be harder to bear nor him.

Sarah Ferguson [*completing the arrangements for the meal*]. Well, indeed, it's easy enough to bear the weight of a person's tongue. You'll come to small harm, Jimmy Caesar, if that's all the trouble you have. Sit up, now, and take your breakfast!

James Caesar [*drawing his chair closer to the table*]. It's kind and thoughtful of you, Mrs. Ferguson, but I've no appetite at all.

Sarah Ferguson. Ah, wheesht with you!

James Caesar. I'll only take the tea. [*He begins to eat his breakfast*]

Sarah Ferguson. Draw up, John, to the table! I wonder ought I to call Andrew in or let him have his after a wee while.

John Ferguson [*coming to the table*]. Leave him for the present. His mind's disturbed.

Sarah Ferguson. Very well. [*She goes to the foot of the stairs*] Hannah! [*She pauses, and then calls again*] Hannah!

James Caesar. You're not bringing her down, are you?

Sarah Ferguson. She has to have her food the same as yourself. [*She calls again*] Are you up yet, Hannah!

Hannah Ferguson [*upstairs*]. Ay, ma.

Sarah Ferguson. Well, come down and have your breakfast. [*She returns to the table and sits down*]

John Ferguson. Mebbe she'd better have hers upstairs.

Sarah Ferguson. No, indeed, she won't have it upstairs. There's no good of her sitting up there crying her eyes out. The world has to go on just the same as ever, no matter what happens. What'll you have,

Jimmy? A piece of soda or a piece of wheaten farl? I baked the soda yesterday.

James Caesar. Ah, I couldn't touch it.

Sarah Ferguson [putting bread on his plate]. Well, just take it on your plate anyway, and if you have a fancy for it after a while, it'll be convenient to you. John, what'll you have?

[HANNAH descends the stairs]

Ah, is that you at last, Hannah? Come on here and have your breakfast! Do you see Jimmy Caesar?

Hannah Ferguson. Ay, ma. Good-morning, Jimmy. [She sits down beside her father]

James Caesar. Good-morning to you, Hannah.

John Ferguson [kissing HANNAH affectionately]. How're you, daughter?

James Caesar. Hannah, I've come here this morning to make a confession to you!

Sarah Ferguson. Well, eat your breakfast first.

James Caesar. I must tell her, Mrs. Ferguson, before I take another bite. Hannah, I went out last night to kill Henry Witherow, but when I was getting ready to kill him, I got afeard, and I run away and hid myself. I come here this morning to tell you the poor sort of a man I am. I daresay you're thankful you broke your word to me, for I'm not much of a support for any woman.

Hannah Ferguson. I don't want you to make no confession to me.

James Caesar. Ah, but I must. Sure, I must tell people the way I feel. That's the only thing that's left to me now. Hannah, will you forgive me for not killing Witherow?

Hannah Ferguson. I di'n't ask you to kill him. I had no call to ask you.

James Caesar [on whom the mean manner has gradually been gaining controll]. If you're not angry with me, Hannah, then I'm glad I didn't do an injury to him. If I had killed him, mebbe it would have done no good! I daresay you da's right! Sure, if I'd done anything to Witherow, I'd 'a' been put in jail, and my business that I've built up this long while would 'a' been sold on me, and mebbe I'd be hanged, and there'd be no good in that at all. I wonder now is it not better to forget and forgive! Of course, if a man does wrong, he ought to be made to suffer for it. That's only right, and if Witherow was brought before the magistrates . . .

[HANNAH gets up suddenly in distress] Hannah Ferguson. Oh, quit talking about it, quit talking! [She goes to the sofa and throws herself prone on it]

Sarah Ferguson [going to her]. There, there, Hannah, don't be upsetting yourself! [She comforts HANNAH]

James Caesar. That's the way of me again, John! I'm always raking things up! I wish now I had killed Witherow. There'd be some satisfaction in that! Do you think Hannah'd marry me if I was to ask her again? I'd be willing to marry her just the same! [He turns to HANNAH] Hi, Hannah, do you hear that? I'm willing to marry you just the same if you'll have me! Will you?

[HANNAH still sobbing, does not reply]

Sarah Ferguson. Hannah, dear, do you not hear Jimmy speaking to you?

James Caesar [getting up and going to HANNAH]. Listen, Hannah! I was thinking as I was coming along that mebbe you'd have a poor opinion of me when you heard the way I'd behaved, but mebbe after all things has turned out for the best, and if you'll marry me I daresay we'll be as happy as any one. [To Mrs. FERGUSON] Dear bless us, Mrs. Ferguson, it's quare the way my mind alters every wee minute or so! I think one time I ought to have killed Witherow, and then I think another time I was right not to kill him, and one minute I'm ashamed of myself and another minute I'm near satisfied. [To HANNAH] Are you listening to me, Hannah?

John Ferguson. Don't trouble her now, Jimmy! Come and finish your breakfast.

James Caesar. Well, we can discuss it later. [He returns to the table and begins his meal again] When I come in here this morning, I felt as if I could never put another bite of food in my mouth, and now I'm eating my breakfast as easy as anything. How would you account for the like of that, John?

John Ferguson. I can account for nothing, Jimmy, outside God's will.

James Caesar [unctuously]. Ah, that's true. "God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform."

[CLUTIE JOHN enters in a state of great excitement]

Clutie John. Mr. Ferguson! Mr. Ferguson!!

Sarah Ferguson [starting up in alarm].

Ah, Clutie John, go 'long with you! You near startled me out of my wits! What do you want to come running in like that for? Go 'long with you, man! We don't want you here the day again!

Clutie John [tensely]. I must tell you, I must tell you! Mr. Ferguson! . . . [*He sees JAMES CAESAR*] Oh, there's Mr. Caesar!

James Caesar. Have you never seen me before, you great gumph you, that you're standing there gaping at me like that?

John Ferguson. What is it, Clutie? [*To JAMES CAESAR*] Don't be harsh with him, Jimmy! He's greatly upset after what happened yesterday.

James Caesar. All right! [*He goes on with his meal*]

Clutie John. I've fearful news for you, Mr. Ferguson! It's quare Mr. Caesar should be here!

James Caesar. What's quare about it?

Clutie John [looking at him in an odd manner]. Didn't you kill Mr. Witherow?

James Caesar [rising in a fury]. Quit out of the place, damn you . . .

Clutie John [shrinking from CAESAR and running to JOHN FERGUSON]. Don't let him strike me, Mr. Ferguson! I'm afeard of my life of him!

John Ferguson [quieting him]. He'll not harm you, Clutie. Sit down somewhere and control yourself! And don't be talking about killing anybody!

Clutie John. But he's dead, Mr. Ferguson!

John Ferguson. Dead!

Sarah Ferguson. Who's dead?

Clutie John. Henry Witherow!

John Ferguson. My God!

Clutie John. He was found this morning in the farmyard shot through the heart.

John Ferguson. Shot!

Clutie John. Ay, shot he was! The peelers is up at the farm now. Sergeant Kernaghan and two constables is there . . .

Sarah Ferguson. Aw, it's not true, it's not true! The poor creature's demented and doesn't know what he's saying!

Hannah Ferguson. Clutie, are you sure? . . .

Clutie John. Ay, Hannah, I am. Certain sure! [*To MRS. FERGUSON*] It is true. It is indeed, and 'deed and doubles! I wouldn't tell you a lie for the world. I saw his corpse myself, stretched out in the yard. It was quare to think of him lying there, and me

could hit him if I liked and him couldn't hit back!

James Caesar. But . . . but who killed him?

[*JOHN FERGUSON turns to look at him, and JAMES CAESAR sees accusation in his eyes*]

I didn't do it, John! It wasn't me that killed him! I swear to God it wasn't me! I'll take my oath on the Bible! . . .

John Ferguson. Jimmy! . . .

James Caesar. I tell you I didn't do it. How do you know he's dead? You only have Clutie John's word for it, and you know rightly he's away in the mind!

Hannah Ferguson. Oh, he's dead, thank God, he's dead!

James Caesar [turning to her]. It's mebbe not true, Hannah . . .

Clutie John. It's as true as death, Hannah! I tell you I saw him myself, and the peelers were asking a wheen of questions . . .

James Caesar [in a panic]. Did they ask anything about me, Clutie? [*He does not wait for an answer, but, sitting down at the table, buries his face in his hands*] Oh, my God, they'll be blaming me for it, and I never did it at all! [*He gets up and goes to JOHN FERGUSON, plucking his arm*] John, listen to me! You know the sort I am, don't you? You know rightly I couldn't have done it myself! I came here this morning and told you I was afeard to do it! Oh, my God, won't you believe me?

Hannah Ferguson. Jimmy!

James Caesar [miserably]. Ay, Hannah.

Hannah Ferguson. Don't deny it if you did it.

James Caesar. I wouldn't deny it! [*He goes to HANNAH*] Hannah, make your da believe me! Tell him you don't think I did it. You don't, do you?

Hannah Ferguson. You say you didn't, Jimmy!

James Caesar. But you think I did do it! I know you do! I can see it in your eyes!

Hannah Ferguson. I'd be proud if you had done it, Jimmy!

James Caesar [miserably]. Every one'll think I did it, the peelers and every one! [*He subsides again at the table*]

Clutie John. It's a fearful thing to take a man's life. It is, in sang! There was many a song made up in Ireland about the like of a thing of that sort. I wonder, now, could

I make up a song about Henry Witherow to be singing on the fair-days!

Sarah Ferguson. Wheesh! with you, Clutie!

James Caesar [starting up and addressing *Clutie John*]. What sort of questions were the peelers asking, Clutie? Did they make any mention of me, did you hear?

Clutie John. I couldn't hear a word they were saying, Mr. Caesar, but whatever questions they were asking, they were putting the answers down in their wee books.

James Caesar. If they get to know I had a grudge against Witherow over the head of Hannah, they'll be after me. They know rightly I never cared for him any time of my life, but then I never done any harm to him for all my talk, and if they didn't know about Hannah, maybe they'd never think of me. [Going to *JOHN FERGUSON*] John, you'll never let on anything, will you? [He turns, without waiting for an answer, and speaks to *MRS. FERGUSON* and *HANNAH*] You two won't either, will you? And Clutie John? I'm sorry, Clutie, for all I said to you. I wasn't thinking, that's why I said it. And if you'll not let on to the peelers about me, I'll give you something for yourself.

Clutie John. What'll you give me, Mr. Caesar?

James Caesar. I don't know yet. I'll give you something. I'll give you your dinner whenever you want it, and I'll let you sleep in my loft. [To *JOHN FERGUSON*] John, make him promise not to clash on me! You have more influence over him nor any one. Where's Andrew? We must make him promise, too! Call him in, Mrs. Ferguson, and bid him promise he won't tell!

John Ferguson. We can't make any promises, Jimmy.

James Caesar. You'll not promise! Oh, you'll never go and tell the peelers, will you, and have them suspecting me, and me didn't do it?

John Ferguson. You must answer to the law, Jimmy . . .

James Caesar. But I didn't do it, I tell you! I'll take my oath I didn't! Where's the Bible? I'll swear on the Bible!

[*ANDREW FERGUSON enters*]

Andrew Ferguson. What ails you all?

John Ferguson. Henry Witherow's dead!

[*ANDREW pauses for a few moments be-*

fore he replies. When he speaks, his voice is very strained]

Andrew Ferguson. Oh!

John Ferguson. He was found in his yard this morning, shot!

Andrew Ferguson. Shot!

John Ferguson. Ay!

Andrew Ferguson. That's . . . quare!

James Caesar [wildly]. Your da thinks it was me that shot him, Andrew, and so does your ma and Hannah, but I tell you I didn't. You know me, Andrew, don't you? You guessed that I wouldn't have the courage to kill Witherow, didn't you? . . .

Andrew Ferguson [turning away from him]. Ay.

James Caesar. There, you hear what your son says, John Ferguson! You hear him, don't you? Andrew doesn't believe I did it. I feel happier in my mind now. Maybe the peelers'll believe me when I tell them I didn't do it. Sergeant Kernaghan knows me well. Him and me was at the same school together . . .

Andrew Ferguson. You ought to try and get away, Jimmy . . .

James Caesar. Get away! . . . Do you not believe me either, Andrew? Do you think I killed him?

Andrew Ferguson. No, I don't believe you did, but it's likely other people'll think it.

John Ferguson. Jimmy, why don't you ease your mind? There's no boundary to the love of God, and if you confess your sin, He'll forgive you for it.

James Caesar. Will I never satisfy you, John. Will you never believe I didn't do it?

John Ferguson. I wish I could believe you.

Andrew Ferguson. If you can prove where you were . . .

James Caesar. How can I prove it when no one seen me?

[*CLUTIE JOHN goes to the door and looks down the loanie*]

Clutie John. Here's the peelers coming!

James Caesar [in terror]. Oh, my God!

Clutie John. There's the sergeant and the constables and a crowd of people running after them!

James Caesar. They're coming for me! I know rightly they are! They'll take me up . . . John, for the love of God, help me to hide somewhere!

John Ferguson. I can't, Jimmy, I can't. If you've broke the law, the law must have its reckoning.

Andrew Ferguson. Have you changed your mind, then, da! You were all for love and forgiveness awhile ago.

John Ferguson. Ay, son, I was, and I am still, but Jimmy must redeem himself. A man should submit to punishment of his own free will, not be dragged to it. I know I'm not thinking clear, but I'm certain that Jimmy should submit to the law, whether he killed Witherow or not. It'll tell again' him if he runs away.

[The noise of the approaching crowd is heard]

James Caesar. I must hide, I must hide! I can't face them! *[He gazes wildly round the room]* Hannah, tell your da to let me hide!

John Ferguson. There's no use in hiding, Jimmy. You can't hide from yourself, can you?

James Caesar. Hide me, Hannah, and God'll reward you!

Hannah Ferguson [appealingly]. Da! . . .

John Ferguson. I can't, daughter. He must submit himself to the will of God. There's no other way for a man to save himself.

[The crowd comes to the door. SERGEANT KERNAGHAN and the two constables step inside the kitchen. The Sergeant advances while the constables keep back the murmuring crowd which surges round the door]

Sergeant Kernaghan. I'm sorry to put you to any bother. *[He sees JAMES CAESAR]* Ah, James Caesar, I arrest you on the suspicion of murdering Henry Witherow, and I warn you that anything you say will be taken down in writing and used as evidence against you!

James Caesar [shrinking]. I didn't do it! I tell you I didn't do it! Sergeant, for the love of God don't take me up! You and me attended the same school together . . .

Sergeant Kernaghan. I'm heartsore at having to do it, Jimmy, but I can't help myself.

[He beckons to the constables, who come forward and put handcuffs on CAESAR's wrists. The crowd penetrates into the room, and the Sergeant goes and pushes it back]

James Caesar [more calmly]. I meant to kill him. I admit that.

[The crowd tosses this admission from lip to lip]

But I didn't do it. If I should never speak

again, that's the God's truth! I'm not sorry he's dead, but it wasn't me that killed him.

Sergeant Kernaghan. Come along, now.

James Caesar. Good-bye to you all!

John Ferguson. God give you peace, Jimmy!

Hannah Ferguson [going to CAESAR and touching his arm] Good-bye, Jimmy!

James Caesar. I wish for your sake I had killed him, I'd be a happier man nor I am.

Sergeant Kernaghan. I must ask you to come along now. *[To the constables]* Just clear the crowd away from the door!

[The constables push the people away from the door, and then they and the Sergeant close about JIMMY CAESAR and take him away. The crowd surges round them and slowly disappears, murmuring loudly as it goes. HANNAH closes the door behind them and then goes and sits down on the sofa beside her mother, who is weeping. There is silence for a moment]

John Ferguson. God knows His own ways best!

[ANDREW stands staring in front of him. Then he goes to the door and opens it, and stands gazing down the lanie after the retreating crowd. CLUTIE JOHN sits down on the seat in the fireplace and takes out his whistle. He begins to play "Willie Reilly and His Colleen Bawn"]

Andrew Ferguson [fiercely]. Quit that damned whistle, will you?

[CLUTIE JOHN looks up at him questioningly, and then puts the whistle away. ANDREW stands still for a moment longer. Then he closes the door and walks towards the fire and holds his hands in front of the blaze]

Andrew Ferguson. It's colder the day nor it was yesterday!

John Ferguson. Ay, son!

ACT FOUR

It is the late afternoon of a day a fortnight later. JOHN FERGUSON, who has become feeble in the interval, but at the same time more deeply religious, is sitting in the attitude in which he was seen at the beginning of the play. His chair is drawn up to the fire, and he has his Bible open in his hands. He is reading the eighteenth chapter of the second book of Samuel. It is clear

from his look of fragility that he is dying. Mrs. FERGUSON is standing at the door, looking down the "loanie."

John Ferguson [reading aloud]. "And the king said, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Ahimaaz answered, When Joab sent the king's servant, and me thy servant, I saw a great tumult, but I knew not what it was. And the king said unto him, Turn aside and stand there. And he turned aside and stood still. And, behold, Cush came; and Cush said, Tidings, my lord, the king: for the Lord hath avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee. And the king said unto Cush, Is the young man Absalom safe? . . ."

Sarah Ferguson. Here's Hannah now, John! She's just turned the corner of the loanie.

John Ferguson [looking up from the Bible]. Ay, wife, it'll be about her time.

Sarah Ferguson [entering the kitchen and setting a kettle on the fire]. I don't know how she can bear to go and see Jimmy the way she does when she minds everything. If it hadn't been for her changing her mind, Witherow would be living now!

John Ferguson [putting the Bible down on the table beside him, and turning to his wife]. You must never say the like of that to her, Sarah! The girl couldn't see in front of her. No one could.

Sarah Ferguson. She would have nothing to do with him before he killed Witherow, and now she goes to see him whenever they'll let her in the jail! You would near think she was in love with him over the head of the crime, though I don't believe she is myself, for all she visits him. [She sits down on the sofa and takes up some darning, on which she begins to work] There's been a quare change in her this last fortnight! She's quieter on it, and not so headstrong and set on herself as she used to be. Indeed, sometimes I near think she's in a decline.

John Ferguson [sighing as he speaks]. Ay, she's been through a mort of sorrow, that girl! She's young to be feeling the weight of the world already.

Sarah Ferguson. Ay, indeed! And there's Andrew hasn't a word to say to any one since it happened. Sometimes I try to talk to him about Jimmy, but sure I might as well hold my tongue. All I can get out of

him is "Ay, ma!" or "No," or mebbe he'll just nod his head. [She sighs] Ah, dear, our children seem to be slipping away from us, John!

John Ferguson. Mebbe they're going past us, Sarah. It's natural, that! You and your children can't keep pace with each other all your life. They must get ahead of you some time. It hurts you when you feel them outstripping you, but it's the way God works, and sure He doesn't leave you without a consolation of some sort. God never hits you with both hands at the one time, Sarah, and if we're losing our children, we're finding ourselves. You and me's drawing closer to one another, woman! [He holds out his hand to her]

Sarah Ferguson [taking his hand]. Ay, John, we are. We were always good comrades since ever we were married, you and me, for all the trouble we've had.

John Ferguson. Ay, wife, ay!

[He takes up the Bible again and reads it to himself. As he does so, HANNAH enters the kitchen. Her manner is more restrained than it was when the play began, and she seems to be older in manner. Her actions appear to be independent of her thoughts]

Sarah Ferguson. You're back again, Hannah?

Hannah Ferguson. Ay, ma! [She takes off her outdoor garments and lays them aside]

John Ferguson. Well, Hannah, how is Jimmy the day?

Hannah Ferguson. He seemed quieter in his mind, da.

John Ferguson. Has he confessed the truth yet?

Hannah Ferguson. No. I didn't like to mention it to him, and he didn't say anything to me. But I know he hasn't confessed, because I went to Mulhern, the solicitor, afterwards, and he told me Jimmy still makes out that he didn't do it. [She comes and sits at the table]

John Ferguson. I wish he'd unburden his mind. It's no good him keeping it up like that. What does Mulhern say about it?

Hannah Ferguson. He doesn't know what to think. He says that when he's by himself, he feels sure Jimmy did it, but when he's with Jimmy, he begins to be doubtful.

John Ferguson. Doubtful.

Hannah Ferguson. Ay. There's something about the way Jimmy denies it that near

makes you believe him. All the same, Mulhern thinks he did it, and he says that if he was to confess, it would be better for him. There are extenuating circumstances . . .

John Ferguson. Nothing can extenuate a murder, Hannah! God's Word is clear. "But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you. Bless them that curse you, and pray for them that spitefully use you. And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek, offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak, forbid him not to take thy coat also." Them words is plain enough. You can't twist them out of their meaning. There can be no excuse, Hannah, for a bad deed: there can only be repentance and forgiveness.

Hannah Ferguson. We all have our natures, da!

John Ferguson. Ay, daughter, we have, but there's the one duty for the whole of us.

Hannah Ferguson. I met John Comber on the road, and he's set on getting up a petition for Jimmy. He says the judge is sure to sentence him to death . . .

Sarah Ferguson. God save us!

Hannah Ferguson. . . . and so we'd better be prepared to do all that's needful.

Sarah Ferguson. Ah, sure, they'll never hang him when they know all the facts. It wouldn't be honest or fair, and there's many says Witherow should have been shot long ago. They'll mebbe give Jimmy penal servitude for life.

Hannah Ferguson. That's worse nor hanging. They take your life, but they don't give you death.

Sarah Ferguson [sighing]. Ah, I daresay you're right! Dear knows, when you think of what they do to you, you'd wonder anybody ever killed a person at all.

[SAM MAWHINNEY, the postman, comes to the door]

Sam Mawhinney. I'm not empty-handed this time, Mrs. Ferguson. I've a letter for you the day.

Sarah Ferguson. A letter?

Sam Mawhinney. Ay, from America. The mail's in the day!

Sarah Ferguson [going to him and taking the letter from him]. A letter from America!

Sam Mawhinney. Ay! Don't you mind the last time the mail come in you were expecting a letter from America, and you

were quare and cut up because you didn't get it? I declare to my goodness it was the very day Witherow was shot. A fortnight the day! I never thought of that now!

Sarah Ferguson [absently]. Thank you, Sam!

Sam Mawhinney. Ah, not at all. I only hope it's good news for you. Are you keeping your health, Mr. Ferguson?

John Ferguson. I'm bravely, thank you, Sam!

Sam Mawhinney. That's right. Good-evening to you, Hannah! Well, I must be going. Good-night to you all!

Sarah Ferguson. Good-night to you, Sam!

[SAM MAWHINNEY goes off]

Sarah Ferguson [standing in the centre of the kitchen gazing vacantly at the letter]. It's from Andrew, John! Will I open it?

John Ferguson. Ay!

[She opens the envelope and takes out the letter and an order for money which are inside]

Sarah Ferguson. Oh, he's sent the money to pay the mortgage!

[She holds the order in her fingers and gazes stupidly at it for a few moments. They are all silent for a while]

Hannah Ferguson [bitterly]. God's late, da!

John Ferguson [feeling the blow to his faith]. Don't, daughter, don't.

Hannah Ferguson [getting up and going to the window]. Oh, it's wicked, it's wicked!

Sarah Ferguson. If it had only come by the last mail!

John Ferguson. There must be some meaning in it. There must be! God doesn't make mistakes.

Sarah Ferguson. Will I read the letter to you, John?

John Ferguson. Ay! Ay, do!

Sarah Ferguson [sitting down at the table]. There's not much in it. [She peers at the letter] I can't understand his writing without my specs!

Hannah Ferguson [coming to her and taking the letter from her]. I'll read it, ma! [She, too, sits down at the table, and she reads the letter aloud] "Dear Brother, I received your letter safe, and am sorry to hear about your trouble, but am glad to see that you are better in yourself and that Sarah and Andrew and Hannah are keeping their health as I am, too, thank God. It is a great deal of money to send, and I have

had a lot of bother to raise it, but I could not let the farm go out of the family without making an effort, so I send the money to you with this letter. If I am well-spared, I will mebbe come home and see you all. I am getting tired of America. It is no place for an old man that wasn't born here. Remember me to all my friends and acquaintances, and with my best love and respect to all at home, I am, your affectionate brother, Andrew. *P.S.*—Write soon." [She turns the letter over] There's a piece on the other side. "*P.S.*—I am sorry I missed the mail yesterday. I made a mistake in the day, but I daresay this will reach you in time.—Andrew."

[She puts the letter down. They sit in silence. Then HANNAH begins to laugh hysterically]

Hannah Ferguson. Isn't it quare and funny, da? Isn't it funny? . . .

Sarah Ferguson [going to her and shaking her] Hannah, Hannah, for dear sake, control yourself!

Hannah Ferguson [lapsing from laughter to tears]. Where's the right in it, da? Where's the right in it? It's not just! It's not fair!

Sarah Ferguson. Ah, quit, Hannah!

Hannah Ferguson. There would have been none of this if he hadn't forgotten the right day, none of it . . . Oh, da, da!

[ANDREW FERGUSON enters]

Andrew Ferguson. Is anything the matter?

Hannah Ferguson. No, no, Andrew! Nothing's the matter! Nothing! Your uncle Andrew forgot the mail-day, that's all! . . .

Andrew Ferguson [to his father]. What's up, da?

John Ferguson [feebly]. It's . . . it's your uncle . . . [He becomes incoherent]

Sarah Ferguson. Your uncle Andrew's sent the money to pay the mortgage, son. He forgot the mail-day, and just missed it. If he hadn't forgot, the money would have been here before . . . before Jimmy killed Witherow!

Hannah Ferguson. Ay! Ay! Before—before Jimmy killed Witherow! And then my da says it was all planned! . . .

Andrew Ferguson [with a queer wrinkled smile on his face, as he takes up the letter and fingers it]. Huh! Uncle Andrew never had a good memory, had he?

[No one speaks]

Well, the farm's safe, anyway.

Hannah Ferguson. Ay, the farm's safe!

John Ferguson. We can't understand everything. It's no good trying to puzzle it all out. We must just have faith . . . that's all! Just have faith!

Hannah Ferguson. One man's dead and another's in jail in danger of his life because my uncle Andrew forgot the mail-day.

Andrew Ferguson. It's . . . it's a quare set-out!

John Ferguson. Ay! [Sighing heavily] Ay!

Andrew Ferguson [hysterically]. Ha! Ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha! . . .

John Ferguson. Andrew, Andrew, son, don't you give way, too! Set an example to your sister of self-control!

Andrew Ferguson [recovering himself]. Ay! Ay, da, I will. [He sits down]

Sarah Ferguson. Hannah's just come back from seeing Jimmy, Andrew!

Andrew Ferguson. Oh! Oh! Oh, yes, I remember, she was going to see him the day, wasn't she? [His voice is very hard and strained] What was he like, Hannah?

[HANNAH does not answer]

Sarah Ferguson. She says he was quieter in his mind . . .

Andrew Ferguson. That's good. It's good to be quiet in your mind! It's well for him.

John Ferguson. It's not well for him, Andrew. He still denies that he killed Witherow . . .

Andrew Ferguson. Mebbe he didn't kill him, da!

John Ferguson. I would like to believe that, but I can't.

Andrew Ferguson. He ought to have killed him. [More emphatically] He ought to have killed him . . . but he didn't.

John Ferguson. Ah, son, what's the good of talking that way? You and Hannah's overstrung, and you hardly know what you're saying or doing, the pair of you. I've noticed how quiet you've been lately, and I believe you've been brooding over Jimmy till now you can't think clearly about him.

Andrew Ferguson. He didn't kill Witherow, da. He hadn't the pluck to kill him. It was me that done it!

Sarah Ferguson [starting up]. You!

John Ferguson [quietly]. Sit down, Sarah! The lad's beside himself.

[MRS. FERGUSON resumes her seat]

Andrew, you must not give way to your fancies like that! [*He rises and faces him*] Come to bed, son, and rest yourself. You look tired and exhausted. [*He takes hold of ANDREW'S arm and tries to lead him to the stairs*]

Andrew Ferguson [*eluding his father's grasp*]. No, da, I'm not away in the mind, as you think. I know rightly what I'm saying. It was me that killed Witherow! [*Now that he has confessed his deed, his voice becomes quite calm*]

John Ferguson. You're demented, son!

Andrew Ferguson. No, da, I'm not. I killed him. With that gun there. [*He points to the gun over the mantel-shelf*]

Sarah Ferguson [*in terrible alarm*]. Son-a-dear, do you know what you're saying?

Andrew Ferguson. I know rightly, ma.

Sarah Ferguson. It's not true, it's not true.

[*JOHN FERGUSON has been standing gaping at his son as if he cannot understand what he is saying. Then, as comprehension comes to him, he goes to ANDREW and grips him by the shoulder*]

John Ferguson [*almost harshly*]. Andrew!

Andrew Ferguson [*quietly*]. Ay, da!

John Ferguson. Do you mean . . . do you mean you killed Witherow?

Andrew Ferguson. I do, da!

John Ferguson [*releasing his grip and staggering back a little*]. Oh, my God, my God!

Sarah Ferguson. It's not true, John, it's not true. The poor lad's mind is turned with trouble.

Andrew Ferguson. It is true. I knew that Jimmy wouldn't kill him, so I made up my mind I'd kill him myself . . .

John Ferguson [*wildly*]. Quit, quit, quit! I must think . . . I must think! [*He goes back to his chair and sinks into it. As he does so, his hand touches his Bible. He pushes it away from him*]

Hannah Ferguson [*going to her brother and putting her arms about him*]. Andrew, dear!

Andrew Ferguson. I'm not sorry I killed him, Hannah!

Hannah Ferguson. No, Andrew, I know you're not.

Andrew Ferguson. But I'm ashamed to think I let Jimmy bear the blame for it. That's as bad as him hiding under the

whin-bush when he should have been killing Witherow himself. It's been on my mind ever since the peelers took him up. That's the only thing that disturbs me. I lie awake at night, and I say to myself, "You took Jimmy's place of your own free will, but you made him take your place against his will!" Mind you, I felt no more remorse when I killed Witherow nor a terrier feels when it kills a rat.

Hannah Ferguson. No, Andrew, why would you?

Andrew Ferguson. I went up to his farm, and when I got there the dog begun to bark, and Witherow come to the door. "Is that you, Jimmy Caesar?" he shouted. "Have you come to kill me?" He let a big coarse laugh out of him when he said that, and I could feel my heart jumping mad inside me. "It's not Jimmy Caesar!" I shouted back at him; "it's me!" I could see him straining to look at me, and his features was puzzled. Then I put my gun up to my shoulder, and I took aim at him. "Away home out of that!" he shouted. And then I pulled the trigger, and he let a yell out of him and fell in a lump on the ground. The dog was barking and straining at its chain . . .

Hannah Ferguson. Poor beast!

Andrew Ferguson. But I didn't mind that. I shouted at it to lie down, and then I come straight home. I mind when I was half-way home, I said to myself, "Mebbe you've not killed him," and I was near turning back to make sure. But I just didn't . . . There was no one in the kitchen when I come in, and I put the gun back where I found it, and no one knew . . . except me. It never entered no one's mind that it was me killed him. I was safe enough, and at first I didn't care whether Jimmy got hung or not. I said to myself it would serve him right if he was hung for being a collie. And then I tried to comfort myself by saying he wouldn't be hung at all when the people knew the way he'd been provoked. But it wasn't any good. I got more and more ashamed, and I couldn't sit still in the house with you all, and my da saying Jimmy ought to confess. I couldn't rest nowhere. The only consolation I had was to go into the fields and listen to Clutie playing his whistle. He knew it was me done it, for all he didn't say anything . . .

[*JOHN FERGUSON rouses himself from*

the lethargy into which he sank when he heard his son's confession. He gets up from his chair and takes hold of ANDREW as if he were protecting him from some danger]

John Ferguson. We must hide him somewhere. That's what we must do. We'll send you to America, Andrew, to live with your uncle. Ay, ay! That's what the money was for! You may be certain sure that was what it come for! You'll be safe when you're out of the country, son! No one'll harm you in America! [*To his wife*] Stir yourself. Sarah, woman, stir yourself! We've no time to lose. The peelers might hear it and come any minute. [*To ANDREW*] Come on, son, and get ready! You must quit the place the night . . .

Andrew Ferguson. No, da . . .

John Ferguson. Ay, son, you must! You can go up to Belfast by the next train, and we'll send the money to you there. You'd better change your name, son! . . . [*He puts his hands to his head as if he were dazed*] I'm all moidhered! Sarah, Sarah, woman!

Sarah Ferguson. Ay, John?

John Ferguson. We must hide him the night. Do you understand me? Mebbe some one heard him telling us about it. You never know who's listening, and the world's full of clash-bags! . . .

Andrew Ferguson. I can't go, da, and leave Jimmy in the wrong.

John Ferguson. Yes, yes, son! That'll be all right! We'll think about Jimmy afterwards. Come and get ready now, son!

[*He tries to lead ANDREW to the staircase, but ANDREW resists him*]

Sarah Ferguson. Go with your da, son, and get ready!

Andrew Ferguson [*freeing himself from them and sitting down again*]. I must do right by Jimmy for my peace' sake.

John Ferguson. No, son, you must save yourself first.

Andrew Ferguson. You're asking me to do what you wouldn't let Jimmy do for all he begged you!

John Ferguson [*fiercely*]. You're my son, Andrew, and Jimmy's not! He always meant to kill Witherow. Many's a time you all heard him say he would do it! Didn't you? You mocked him yourselves over the head of it. He killed the man many's a while in his mind, and the Bible says if you

think a sin, you commit a sin. [*He takes hold of ANDREW again*] Come away, son! Hannah, persuade him . . .

Hannah Ferguson. I can't, da. Andrew knows what's best for himself.

Sarah Ferguson. Do you want your brother hanged, Hannah? Is that what you want?

Hannah Ferguson. What peace will Andrew have if Jimmy suffers for him?

Andrew Ferguson. That's what I say to myself many's a time, Hannah! You see that yourself, da, don't you?

John Ferguson [*feebly going to his chair*]. I've suffered enough! I've suffered enough, Andrew! It's not just or right to put more trouble on me now. I've lost my health . . . and then there was the mortgage, and . . . Hannah . . . and Jimmy . . . and now! . . . Oh, I've bore enough, and it's not fair to ask me to bear any more.

Hannah Ferguson. We all have to make our own peace, da. We can't have it made for us. You used always to say that.

Andrew Ferguson. Hannah's right, da. There'll be no content for me till I content myself. [*He rises*] I'll go down now to the barracks and tell the sergeant.

John Ferguson [*turning to him and speaking brokenly*]. Son, son! . . .

Sarah Ferguson. I'll not have him made suffer! [*Going to ANDREW and holding him tightly*] I'll not let you go, Andrew, I'll not let you go!

Andrew Ferguson. I must go, ma, for my peace' sake. Every minute that Jimmy's locked in jail is a burden on my mind. I've mocked the man times and times for a coward, though he couldn't help his nature, but I'm worse nor him a hundred times.

Sarah Ferguson. Be wheesht with you, son, be wheesht!

Andrew Ferguson. Eating the heart out of me, it is. Gnawing and gnawing! . . . I never get the picture of Jimmy out of my mind! I run for miles this morning to try and tire myself out so's I could sleep and rest myself, but I can't get content nohow. That's the way of it, ma. You understand me, da, don't you?

John Ferguson. Ay, son, I understand you.

Sarah Ferguson. You can go to America. Andrew, the way your da said you could, and when you're safe, you can send home

a confession to save Jimmy. That would do, wouldn't it?

John Ferguson [*eagerly clutching at the straw*]. Ay, ay, that would do, Andrew.

Sarah Ferguson. Or we could go ourselves and tell the peelers when you were safely out of it.

Hannah Ferguson. They might think it was a made-up thing . . .

Sarah Ferguson [*rounding on her*]. Quit, you! It doesn't become you, Hannah, to be telling your brother what to do when it's your fault he's in the trouble he is.

Hannah Ferguson. Ma, ma, don't say it . . .

Sarah Ferguson. Ay, you can cry well enough, but that'll not save you from the blame. If you'd taken Jimmy at the start . . .

John Ferguson. Sarah, woman, don't . . . don't talk to her that way!

Sarah Ferguson. I will talk to her. It was her that killed Witherow, and no one else. It's her that ought to be hanged . . .

Andrew Ferguson [*standing up and shouting at his mother*]. Ma!

Sarah Ferguson [*collapsing*]. Am I to see my own son sent to the gallows? Am I to sit still and let you hang him between you? John, are you going to let Hannah drive Andrew to the jail? . . .

Andrew Ferguson. She's not driving me, ma. No one could.

Sarah Ferguson [*ignoring her son*]. John, will you be content to let her . . .

John Ferguson [*patiently*]. I'm trying to discover God's will, Sarah.

Sarah Ferguson [*passionately*]. I don't want God's will! I want my son! It's nothing to me what he done—he's my son! I don't care if he killed a hundred men—he's my son! I'll not let him go to the jail. I'll take him away myself to some place where he'll be safe. [*She goes over to ANDREW*] Get ready, Andrew, and we'll go away together the night. Your da wanted you to go a minute since. [*She tries to draw him away from his seat*] Come with me, son, and don't be heeding Hannah.

Andrew Ferguson [*resisting her*]. Don't, ma. [*He turns to his father*] Da!

John Ferguson. I can't advise you, son. Don't ask me. I was weak a minute ago. I forgot God's will. Mebbe you're right, son . . . but don't ask me to advise you.

I'm getting old, and I haven't the strength of mind I had one time . . .

Sarah Ferguson. You'll never let him go and give himself up, will you? Oh, have you no nature at all, none of you? I thought you took pride in him, John! . . .

John Ferguson. I did take pride in him, but I take no pride in anything now. I must have sinned bitterly against God to be punished this way. It must have been something I done that's brought calamity on us. I'd be willing to pay whatever price was demanded of me . . . but Andrew! . . .

Andrew Ferguson. Da, a man must clean himself, mustn't he?

John Ferguson. Ay. Ay, son!

Andrew Ferguson. It's no good other people doing things for him. He must do them himself.

John Ferguson. Yes, yes.

Andrew Ferguson. And it's no good any one doing anything for me. I must do it myself, da. Jimmy can't pay for me. He can only pay for himself.

Sarah Ferguson. I won't let you go, son! . . .

Andrew Ferguson. If they were to hang Jimmy, ma, or to keep him in jail for the rest of his life, do you think would I be happy?

Sarah Ferguson. Ah, but you could forget, son, in a new place. We'd go where no one knew anything about us and begin all over again.

Andrew Ferguson. We'd know, ma. Oh, don't you mind what my da said to Jimmy: "You can't hide from yourself"? There's nothing truer nor that.

Sarah Ferguson [*beating her breast*]. Oh, will no one help me to keep my son safe? Will you all take him from me? [*ANDREW goes to her and kisses her hair*]

Andrew Ferguson. It's best this way, ma. You'll see that yourself some day.

[*MRS. FERGUSON clutches him to her*]

Sarah Ferguson. Don't leave me, son.

Andrew Ferguson. I must, ma, for my peace' sake!

[*He kisses her and then releases himself from her embrace. She buries her face on the table and sobs without restraint*]

Will you come to the barracks with me, da?

[*JOHN FERGUSON looks up piteously at his son: His will fails him, and he puts out his hands in supplication to AN-*

DREW, and then, recovering himself, draws them in again]

John Ferguson. Don't ask me, son; I couldn't bear it.

Andrew Ferguson. It'll be lonely going there by myself. Will you come, Hannah?

Hannah Ferguson [quietly]. Ay, Andrew.

Andrew Ferguson. Thank you, Hannah.

[He puts on his coat and cap. HANNAH picks up the garments which she threw aside when she first came into the kitchen, and puts them on. There is silence, save for MRS. FERGUSON'S sobs, while they do so]

Andrew Ferguson. Good-night, da!

John Ferguson [without looking up]. Good-night, Andrew!

[ANDREW bends down to kiss his father, who draws him close to him]

John Ferguson [brokenly]. My son, my son!

Andrew Ferguson [chokingly]. Da! [He releases himself and goes to his mother]

Andrew Ferguson. Good-night, ma!

Sarah Ferguson [starting up and clinging to him]. No, no, Andrew, no!

Andrew Ferguson [firmly]. Good-night, ma! [He kisses her, and then gently releases himself from her clasp and puts her back into her chair]

Andrew Ferguson [to his father]. I think John Luke'll be able to take care of the farm for a day or two, but I wouldn't trust him longer, da. He's bone idle, that man, and you'd better get some one else as soon as you can. If you were to get some one that understood management, he would do rightly as a labourer if he was watched well. Arthur Cairnduff heard of a suitable person a while ago that might do.

John Ferguson. Ay, son, ay.

Andrew Ferguson. And Kerr, the butcher, 'll give you a good price for the bullock. [To HANNAH] Are you ready, Hannah?

Hannah Ferguson. Ay, Andrew!

Andrew Ferguson [vaguely]. Well, I'll bid you all good-night.

John Ferguson. Good-night, son.

Andrew Ferguson. I'll . . . I'll mebbe see you again . . . some day!

[He pauses for a moment, but his father does not reply. HANNAH opens the door, and ANDREW goes out]

Andrew Ferguson [in the doorway]. The air's turned cold.

Hannah Ferguson [to her father]. I'll be back as soon as I can, da!

[She goes out, closing the door behind her. The sound rouses MRS. FERGUSON, who sits up and gazes dazedly about her]

Sarah Ferguson. Where are they? They're not gone?

John Ferguson. Ay, they've gone. Sit down, wife.

Sarah Ferguson. Oh, why did you let them go? I can't let him go, John, I can't let him go!

John Ferguson. You must, Sarah. God has some purpose with us, and there's no use in holding out against God, for He knows, and we don't.

Sarah Ferguson. I won't let him go! [She goes to the door and opens it]. I'll bring him back!

[She goes out, shouting "Andrew! Andrew!" and leaves the door open. JOHN FERGUSON sits brooding before the fire for a few moments. Then he gets up, moving feebly, and goes across the room and shuts the door. When he has done so, he stands for a moment or two gazing helplessly about the room. Then he goes back to his seat. As he sits down, his hand comes in contact with the open Bible. Almost mechanically he picks it up and begins to read where he left off when the Act began. His lips move as he reads to himself. Then he slowly reads aloud]

John Ferguson. "And the king said unto Cush, Is the young man Absalom safe? . . ."

[The door opens, and MRS. FERGUSON, weeping, enters]

Sarah Ferguson. They've gone! They wouldn't come back! It's not right to be sending him away like that! He's my only son, and I'm an old woman. You had no call to be sending him away.

John Ferguson. Isn't he the only son I have, too? Is it any easier for a father to give up his son nor it is for a mother? Has a man no pride in his child, and no grief when it dies or does wrong? Is it women only that can feel hurt? Woman, woman, your sorrow is no more nor mine, and mine is no more nor yours. We're just stricken together. Come here, Sarah! [She comes to

him] Sit down, woman, here by the side of me, and give me a hold of your hand. [*She sits down on the stool beside him*] We've been married a long while, Sarah, and shared our good fortune and our bad. We've had our pride and our humiliation. God's been good to us, and He's been bitter hard. But whatever it was, we've bore it together, haven't we?

Sarah Ferguson. Ay, John.

John Ferguson. And we'll bear this together too, woman, won't we?

Sarah Ferguson. It's a hard thing for any one to bear. Your own son to be taken from you . . .

John Ferguson. Ay, wife, it is, but we must just bear it, for God knows better nor we do what's right to be done. [*He takes up the Bible again*] Listen to God's

Word, Sarah, and that'll strengthen you. [*He continues his reading*] "And the king said unto Cush, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Cush answered, The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is. And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went [*his voice beginning to break*] thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son . . . my son."

[*His voice ends in a sob. The Bible falls from his hands on to his lap. He sits staring into the fire. There is a low moan from his wife*]

THE END

THE CORAL

(DIE KORALLE)

By GEORG KAISER

Translated from the German by WINIFRED KATZIN

The three following plays—"The Coral," "Gas I," and "Gas II"—constitute a trilogy insofar as each presents a stage in the development of the main idea that runs through all. In its action, however, each play forms a complete and independent unit

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The translations of "The Coral" and "Gas II" were made especially for this collection

GEORG KAISER AND "EXPRESSIONISM"

GEORG KAISER, the author of *The Coral*, *Gas I*, and *Gas II*, was born in Magdeburg in 1878, the son of a merchant. After some years spent in business, he turned to the theatre. He wrote his first play, *Rector Kleist*, when he was twenty-five years old, and since that time devoted himself entirely to playwriting. Before his death in 1945 he wrote about forty plays, among the most important of which are the trilogy included in this volume, and *From Morn to Midnight* (*Von Morgen bis Mitternachts*), *Hell, Way, Earth* (*Hölle, Weg, Erde*), and *The Fire in the Opera House* (*Der Brand im Opernhaus*). Although a strikingly original playwright, he has evidently been strongly influenced by Strindberg, Wedekind, Sternheim, and even by Shaw. As the Russian dramatist Andreyev confessed that he worked under "the sign of Schopenhauer," so Kaiser "names Schopenhauer, Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, Holderlin, and Plato as his spiritual fathers." Since Kaiser is in general an expressionist, and *The Coral*, *Gas I*, and *Gas II* are expressionistic, a description of the materials and methods of expressionism may at the same time both characterize the dramatist and throw light upon these particular plays.

Expressionism is difficult to define or even describe, since it employs so wide a variety of both subject-matter and treatment and is so inconsistent in its practices. Commonly supposed to have originated in Germany within the past decade or two, it really was consciously employed by Strindberg, and some of its phases have appeared sporadically in the work of various dramatists for generations past. As a dominant method, however, it has arisen largely since the World War and has flourished principally in Germany, where it has been practiced with more or less success by such dramatists as Kaiser, Hasenclever, Kokoscha, and Toller, of whom Kaiser is the chief.

Expressionism, as now practiced, has its roots in the unsettled conditions following World War I. It represents no organized movement and thus far has crystallized into no definite creed. But certain of its general characteristics are plain enough. It starts by taking its raw material from real life (no matter how far it may afterwards transcend this limit), but it aims to distill the very essence of reality and to present it in terms of the universal. Naturally, then, it is chiefly concerned not with phenomena but with ideas and the springs of conduct. Since it pursues its idea or its passions from the real world into the transcendental, it may place its action on more than one plane of consciousness,—reality passing into dream, finite into infinite, consciousness into subconsciousness, as may be demanded by the varying phases of its dominant idea or the successive moods of its characters. Hence it may start with something resembling realism and finally pass into the wildest phantasmagoria, even within the limits of a single action. The background of the action is usually symbolic of the states of mind of the characters (and this forms the basis of expressionism in scenic design), and often the entire action itself is only one elaborate symbol. Significantly, the action is usually presented in brief scenes, which are connected only by the fact that all present successive emotional reactions or various phases of the idea. The characters are mere types, and usually bear only type names, such as The Man, The Woman, The Doctor, The Policeman, The Billionaire. Each is dominated by some one idea or passion, to such an extent that he seems, in an extreme case, scarcely even a type, hardly more than a personified abstraction. The speech is often in staccato style, sometimes hurried and broken, and is often less significant than the action.

In general, expressionism seems an attempt, not always successful, to penetrate to the inner and universal reality. The expressionist is in his technique reckless, daring, unconventional—and utterly inconsistent in his practice. Whether or not expressionism is a passing phase, it is undoubtedly significant of the times and it has enlarged the resources of dramaturgy. Its influence has been felt in America, notably in the work of Eugene O'Neill.

The Coral was first produced in 1917; *Gas*, part I, in 1918; and *Gas*, part II, in 1920; all at the Neues Theater, in Frankfurt, Germany. *Gas*, part I, was produced in English, by the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, at Birmingham, England, in 1923, and at the Goodman Memorial Theatre, Chicago, in 1926.

CHARACTERS

THE BILLIONAIRE
THE SON
THE DAUGHTER
THE SECRETARY
THE YOUNG WOMAN IN TAFFETA
THE MAN IN BLUE
THE LADY IN BLACK
THE DAUGHTER OF THE LADY IN BLACK
THE GENTLEMAN IN GRAY
FIRST SERVANT
SECOND SERVANT
THE SINGER
THE DOCTOR
THE MUSEUM DIRECTOR
THE CAPTAIN
FIRST JUDGE
SECOND JUDGE
A GUARD
A PRIEST

*The action takes place at the present day in an industrialized country
not definitely located*

THE CORAL

ACT ONE

An oval room, "The warm heart of the earth." Pale wall-panels in which the doors are invisible, two rear, one left. Only two round armchairs of white elephant-leather, centre, opposite and far apart. On the outer wing of the chair, right a signal apparatus.

In this chair sits the SECRETARY. An indefinable shy energy in the profile. Reddish stubble of hair in narrow streaks from head to chin. The frame, in its suit of the roughest material, small, yet derives weight and importance from a certain ever-ready initiative, with effort suppressed. In the other chair the YOUNG WOMAN in TAFFETA.

Secretary. Would you mind . . .

The Young Woman in Taffeta. Oh, I understand you—will I be brief. I am not the only one waiting to be heard. The ante-room is crowded with others—and perhaps their cases are better justified. Who can tell? The wretched are in all the earth's corners. Whether the corner my fate thought fit to set me down in is an extra windy one . . .

Secretary. I should have to know what your fate has been before I could judge of that.

Young Woman in Taffeta. Hell, sir. Yes, hell. I do not exaggerate; that is not my way. Or might I describe it better by . . . one is human, sir, one has a mother . . . believes in God . . . yes, one is still capable of that, in spite of everything. And I can't speak the words out loud, but I . . . buy my bread with my body.

Secretary. Do you wish to be admitted into a home?

Young Woman in Taffeta. With flowers shining on the window ledges!

Secretary [Takes a notebook out of his pocket and writes]. You have two years' time in which to consider the foundations of a new life.

Young Woman in Taffeta. Two . . .

Secretary. The doors of every home for women who have strayed stand open to you today.

Young Woman in Taffeta [Taking his hand

and kissing it—hysterically]. I never sold my childhood faith. I never held God up for sale. Now he seeks me out with his messenger . . . my God's messenger . . . you are he. Take my burning thanks; I offer it on my knees. More than that . . . more than that, it is God himself who goes amongst us again. We are all saved . . . hallelujah, amen!

[The SECRETARY presses a button on the signal board. Immediately two servants enter left, herculean figures in yellow livery. They raise the YOUNG WOMAN in TAFFETA and lead her through the door, rear.]

Young Woman in Taffeta [Ecstatically]. A home for the fallen—I shall become another woman there . . . another . . .

[She and the servants go. The servants admit the MAN in BLUE and lead him to the chair, then go.]

Secretary. Would you mind . . .

Man in Blue [Speaking with difficulty]. My chest . . .

Secretary. Do you wish to be admitted to a sanatorium?

Man in Blue [Burying his face in his hands]. They've turned me out now that I have worked my strength away for them. Am I an old man? No. I'm in the prime of life, but I look aged, aged. My clothes flap on my bones—once I filled them out to the very seams. The System has been the ruin of me.

Secretary. Are you a laborer?

Man in Blue. The System ruins everyone with its inhuman using up of all a man's capacity. And always a crowd waiting, so that one's got to be used up quick to make room for the next one.

Secretary. Can you find no employment in any factory?

Man in Blue. They don't even let me through the gates any more. I've been walking the streets for a fortnight now, and I have eaten my last penny away. Now . . .

Secretary. We have settlements on the land.

Man in Blue. We have—I know. They are far off and I can't get there on foot.

Secretary. They lie on the train line.

Man in Blue. I . . . haven't the price of a ticket.

Secretary [Pulls out his notebook and writes. Hands the slip of paper across]. Show this note outside.

Man in Blue [Reads—stands up]. That is more than the train fare. [Stammering.] I have a wife and children. I can take them with me—and I had meant to leave them!

[The SECRETARY presses a button on the signal-board. The two servants come.]

Man in Blue [Already hastening out, left]. My wife . . . my children! [Goes.]

[The servants shut the door behind him, then open it again and admit the LADY IN BLACK and her daughter. The DAUGHTER carries a violin case.]

Lady in Black [To the servants]. Thank you—I prefer to stand. [Servants go.]

Secretary [Standing up]. Would you mind . . .

Lady in Black [Calmly]. I decided to take this step for my daughter's sake. I lost my husband a few months ago. He left me almost nothing. For myself I have been able to find a situation which will keep me, but I know that I should never earn enough for my daughter's musical training. I have reason to believe that her talent is great enough to ensure her future. I purposely brought no testimonials to that effect. The best witness to her capability is her playing. Will you hear her?

Secretary. I believe your daughter also will find that more enjoyable when her training is completed.

Lady in Black. Am I to assume from that, that . . . [The SECRETARY writes. To her daughter]. Kiss his hand.

Secretary [Gives the sheet to the LADY IN BLACK]. Collect this monthly until the end of her studies.

Lady in Black [Without reading it]. Thanks must weary you, you hear them so often. People must seem pitiable to you, you make so many of them happy. As for us, we can but marvel at the miracle that there can exist someone who does not shut himself away from us when we come to him with our troubles. To hear us all is an act of greater courage than the fulfillment of our requests is an act of unspeakable goodness.

[The SECRETARY presses a button on the signal-board. The servants come and lead the LADY IN BLACK and her

daughter away. A signal buzzes. Immediately the SECRETARY presses another button. One of the servants appears, left.]

Secretary. Wait. [Servant goes.]

[Through the righthand door in the rear which, as it opens, is seen to be heavily padded, the BILLIONAIRE hastens in. The detailed description of the SECRETARY above aimed at the description of the BILLIONAIRE, for the SECRETARY is merely his double, identical to a hair. Even in speech and gesture the likeness is complete.]

Billionaire. The sailing-list of the 'Freedom of the Seas.' Received after departure yesterday and reported this morning by radio. My son does not appear among the passengers.

Secretary. Only his companion.

Billionaire. The list is incomplete.

Secretary. They are usually perfectly accurate.

Billionaire. Where is my son if his companion is on that steamer? He must have booked on her. It was my wish. The papers published the names of every first-class passenger, and my son's was the first.

Secretary. I don't believe there is any error.

Billionaire. He must be on board. There is no other ship he could possibly be on. I sent express instructions to his companion that they were to come on her; she is the fastest of all steamers. The report is wrong. Get in touch with the shipping-office. Ask the source of the error. Whether on board—or in the drawing-up of the list. [SECRETARY hesitates]. Wait at the telephone for an answer.

Secretary. It will keep me . . .

Billionaire. From what?

Secretary. Today is open Thursday.

Billionaire [Thoughtfully]. Open Thursday. [The SECRETARY waits]. Go and inquire. I'll stay here meanwhile. [SECRETARY gives him the notebook]. Say the matter is exceedingly urgent and report at once. [SECRETARY leaves through door left. BILLIONAIRE sits down in chair, presses button. Servants admit the GENTLEMAN IN GRAY, powerful frame, in ample light-gray suit, the pockets stuffed with newspapers and pamphlets, round red head, shorn. Sandals.]

Gentleman in Gray [Following the servants, who indicate the chair—fanning himself with his cap]. Take it slow. Wait a minute.

Breathe deep. [*Servants wait*]. Better keep 'em calm out there—this is going to take some time. [*To the BILLIONAIRE*]. It won't be denied either. I shall have your attention riveted with the first three words. [*To the servants*]. I'm no wild beast. [*At a sign from the BILLIONAIRE, servants off.*]

Billionaire. Would you . . .

Gentleman in Gray [*Looking about him*]. So this is the room all the hymns are about—fountain of great compassion—holy of holies whence love and assistance flow . . . [*With descriptive gestures*]. Sweeping circle—significant form—glowing heart of the earth.

Billionaire. Say what you have to say . . .

Gentleman in Gray. Impressive bareness—two chairs—lots of room for plaints and lamentations. Extraordinary the paneling hasn't turned dark yet under the cries of distress dashing against it. [*BILLIONAIRE moves his hand towards the signal-board. GENTLEMAN notices the movement*]. Don't ring for the servants. I know this open Thursday is precious for all who wait. Each wasted moment and some human fate is determined.

Billionaire. In what connection do you seek my help?

Gentleman in Gray. I . . . [*leaning forward*] want to help you. [*BILLIONAIRE makes another involuntary movement towards the wall*]. No need. I'm sane, quite. I thought this over a long time. I've studied the material—worked over it—and come to the result—and the solution is of absurd simplicity. The whole struggle—this gigantic fight which is waged at present with enormous disposal of means and counter-means—collapses, flows away, is gone.

Billionaire. What struggle do you mean?

Gentleman in Gray. The only one which rages eternally—between poor and rich.

Billionaire. That . . .

Gentleman in Gray. I can settle.

Billionaire. [*With a searching look that flashes interest*]. What made you come to me?

Gentleman in Gray. You're surprised. But I had to hold your attention in the first moment or all was lost. The servants wouldn't have let me through a second time. No trifling with those two. [*Bringing out his papers with violence*]. I now proceed to develop what I briefly mentioned before. This is material—exhaustive assurances. Socialist newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, the entire arsenal of the fighting proletariat. Appeals, estimates

of means for stirring up success—tariffs, statistics, tables of figures, flood of literature. Literature—nothing else. And brings nobody a single step further, the rift gapes wider every day. For it is built upon enmity to the knife. [*Pushing it all back into his pockets*]. Pity for their pains. Useless wandering in blind alleys. To no purpose. Do you follow me?

Billionaire. I don't understand.

Gentleman in Gray. What are you doing here? Giving with both hands. Whoever asks, gets. Much or little, whatever they want. Your billions make it possible. You declare your open Thursday. All come and receive. Wretchedness creeps over this threshold cowering, and dances out joy. The mouths of the oppressed hail paradise in this oval room—here beats the heart of the earth—glowing, merciful. Not for a moment does it miss a beat—but spends and spends. Why do you do it?

Billionaire. My millions . . .

Gentleman in Gray. No.

Billionaire. What then?

Gentleman in Gray. Your wealth revolts you. [*BILLIONAIRE raises one hand*]. You're not aware of it yourself, but for me there can be no other reason I do assure you. I didn't come upon it overnight. I've run around too in all the wearisome blind-alleys until I found the open road that alone leads to the goal.

Billionaire. What goal?

Gentleman in Gray. The end of the fight, the struggle between rich and poor. A thing that no party, no parole, can bring to pass, that you can make real with a single stroke of your pen. And thereby render all the rest superfluous,—this glowing heart of the earth of yours, your open Thursday, the assemblage of misery in your anteroom. For they are all mere drops you pour into the sea of distress. Take it from me,—I know. But by the pen-stroke I refer to, you can proclaim eternal peace on earth. Sign this declaration.

Billionaire. [*Without taking the document*]. What declaration do you want of me?

Gentleman in Gray. That you regard the enrichment of individuals as the most monstrous of evils.

Billionaire. That I . . .

Gentleman in Gray. You must. It must come from you, the billionaire of billionaires. Coming from you it will have importance, weight. Like a lightning flash it will illuminate the battlefields where the opposing forces now

stand confronting each other armed to the teeth. The white flag of peaceable discussion, that is what we will run up—understanding. War will then become superfluous, the cause itself annulled. You did not desire riches—circumstances forced you. But there is a way to alter that condition, and a solution will be found and sought for in a spirit of brotherhood.

Billionaire. I hardly think . . .

Gentleman in Gray. You alone, you alone can do it. You make these gifts because you have to. An inner force compels it. But it was all in little until I came to show you the greater thing—and now you will sign with joy. [*The BILLIONAIRE stands up*]. Surely you do not mean to call your servants?

Billionaire. I . . . [*Stands behind the chair thinking*].

Gentleman in Gray. I knew you would.

Billionaire. I am going to explain to you.

Gentleman in Gray. Your signature.

Billionaire [*Again repudiating*]. Then you shall say whether I am able to sign that paper or not.

Gentleman in Gray. You must.

Billionaire [*Returning to his seat*]. Since it appears to be your wish to turn the whole order of things upside down, I must try to construct for you my world as it appears to me. Do you know anything of my beginnings?

Gentleman in Gray. Yes, your own powers.

Billionaire. My own weaknesses.

[*GENTLEMAN IN GRAY looks at him disconcerted.*]

Billionaire. Or let us say—fear . . . dread. Weakness and fear, then. But you will not grasp this in the space of a word or two. My career—as they say—is told in every school book. So it is a well known story which I am about to repeat. The data will be the same, only I shall lend them a different significance. My father was an employee in the factory which now belongs to me. Whether he kept the furnace going under a cauldron or carried loads from place to place, I don't know. At any rate, he did not earn much, for we lived in wretched circumstances. One Monday—it was payday—he failed to come home. He had been given notice to quit, for he was used up—and he had taken his last money and gone off with it. He could never have provided for us any longer. On that night my mother took her own life. Somewhere in the house I heard a scream . . . I didn't run to see what

it was, I knew already—I was eight years old. In that moment I knew what horror was, and it took root in me. It stood before me like a gray wall that I must climb over to escape the horror that pursued me. The horror made up of my father's staying off with his wages and my mother's scream set me on my way—drove me to flight. It stood at my back as I worked—I found employment in the same factory. It never left me even for a second—and I fled and fled before it—and flee still, for it stands behind me somewhere now as then.

Gentleman in Gray. You made a bewilderingly rapid rise.

Billionaire. Tireless diligence, tireless industry, tireless flight, nothing else. I must keep the distance ever wider between the horror and myself. It drove me on. No hope of quarter, that much I have learned. It goaded me forward. The mind becomes ingenious against a dread that freezes up the limbs. There stood the machines which had sucked my father dry, hung my mother by the neck from a hook on a door, they would crush and maim me too unless I became their master first. The factory, with its machines—with its people set between me and the horror—that was the first I ever knew of rest.

Gentleman in Gray [*Brushing his hand across his forehead*]. But after all . . . such an experience occurs a hundred times a day . . . the father disappears, the mother . . .

Billionaire. It struck me down because I was particularly weakly. I must have been, or I should have withstood it better. Instead, I ran away as hard as I could go. Have I said enough?

Gentleman in Gray [*Staggered*]. I protest . .

Billionaire. Against the weakling before you?

Gentleman in Gray. Then you have no mercy on your fellow men . . .

Billionaire. No fugitive may see whom he tramples underfoot.

Gentleman in Gray [*Joyfully and with a searching regard*]. Nevertheless—'The warm heart of the earth'.

Billionaire. Certainly. I refuse to be brought in touch with poverty—it is too powerful a reminder. I instituted the Open Thursday, therefore—I know then when to hide myself.

Gentleman in Gray. Yet you sit here and listen to it all.

Billionaire. Error. My Secretary sits here.

Gentleman in Gray [After a pause—sharply]. Is that your cosmic plan?

Billionaire. Not mine—it is the cosmic plan.

Gentleman in Gray. That each class is one of the stages of escape?

Billionaire. All are fugitives.

Gentleman in Gray. And the fleetest . . . the . . .

Billionaire. Utterest cowards . . . yes . . .

Gentleman in Gray. Triumph . . .

Billionaire. My sort.

Gentleman in Gray [Groaning, then with irony]. Then I must rest my hope in a humanity without cowards.

Billionaire. Some will always be born more timid than the rest. The cause is of no consequence. It is a lever which sets itself in motion. Progress not whither but whence—your suspicions grow. Exactly. I express what you assume. And I am more familiar than you with this line of thought. Where do they come from, the great who inherit the world? They rise out of the dark because they were in the dark. And there experience the horror . . . this way or that . . . Blazing meteors that flare . . . and fall.

Gentleman in Gray [Mocking]. And when . . . are you due to fall? [The BILLIONAIRE shakes his head, smiling]. How have you insured yourself against the fate of meteors?

Billionaire. I have a son. [The SECRETARY comes back. BILLIONAIRE rises, goes toward SECRETARY]. Has the mistake been corrected?

The Secretary. The list was complete.

Billionaire. Without my son?

Secretary. He is not on the 'Freedom of the Seas.'

Billionaire. But his companion is.

Secretary. They must have separated.

Billionaire. And he with orders not to stir from his side. [The SECRETARY is silent]. I will have an explanation. At this moment I do not even know where my son is. Get into touch with his companion by radio. Let him report. Something must have happened. I do not understand how he can be traveling without my son.

Secretary. Your son is young.

Billionaire. Tender chains that . . . ? We shall soon know the reason. [SECRETARY off again. The BILLIONAIRE comes back to his chair]. Did my story affect you so deeply then?

Gentleman in Gray [Had leapt up as the SECRETARY entered. He is still staring at the

door through which he disappeared. Now he turns to the BILLIONAIRE]. Do I see double? Is it you sitting here? Is it you who just went through that door? Is it yourself you were just speaking to?

Billionaire. No. I was arranging a piece of business with my secretary.

Gentleman in Gray. The Secretary—! are you brothers? But even then it would be . . .

Billionaire. But possible, as you observe.

Gentleman in Gray. [Dropping into the chair]. Horrible.

Billionaire. A common prank of Nature's. You'll find a repetition of each of us, if you try, of course. I had mine looked for—and I admit that fortune favored me.

Gentleman in Gray. Fortune—?

Billionaire. It serves many excellent purposes for me. I can be here and there without ever bestirring myself. Even at this Open Thursday I am present in my well-known person—and am perhaps on a fishing trip at some distant river.

Gentleman in Gray. Do you still know which one you are?

Billionaire. I imagine so.

Gentleman in Gray. But everybody else takes the Secretary for you?

Billionaire. Except the two servants who guard my personal Secretary.

Gentleman in Gray. Otherwise you are indistinguishable?

Billionaire. Except for a small and unobtrusive sign, a coral which the Secretary wears on his watch chain. The one of us who wears the coral is the Secretary.

Gentleman in Gray. And only the servants know?

Billionaire. They are detectives.

Gentleman in Gray. What if I should betray your secret?

Billionaire. Who would believe you? It would be one more legend about me.

Gentleman in Gray [Shaking his head energetically]. You've no coral on your watch-chain,—or—I didn't notice, were you wearing one before . . .

Billionaire. No. I've talked to you since you came in in my own person, and if you wish to hear the rest—

Gentleman in Gray [Laughing]. The end of your head-over-heels flight before the horror—or is there no end?

Billionaire. In my son. I have a daughter, but the stronger bond is with the son, of

course. Have you children? No. Then you must allow me to know. With a son one feels his continuation—one's own continuation—in his beginning. That is a law that runs in the blood. It is my most certain conviction that it is so. Every father wishes that his son shall have it better than he did.

Gentleman in Gray. And not know the horror, as you call it.

Billionaire. Need I say any more? It is all so obvious.

Gentleman in Gray. And have you protected him?

Billionaire. I let him live in brightness. He has no contact with those things that scream and wail from your pamphlets. I have led him along a bypath from all that.

Gentleman in Gray. Where do you keep him hidden?

Billionaire. I don't keep him hidden. The earth has so many sunny strands.

Gentleman in Gray. Where the horror may be dreamt away.

Billionaire. Where one can make oneself a happier past.

Gentleman in Gray. And have rest from flight, and blessed peacefulness.

Billionaire. In paradise.

Gentleman in Gray. You found your outward double—the Secretary.

Billionaire. Does that still excite you?

Gentleman in Gray. No, there's method in it.

Billionaire. How do you mean?

Gentleman in Gray. And now you're forming an inward double—your son.

Billionaire. It may be my passion to exchange.

Gentleman in Gray. With such reasons.

Billionaire. So fearsome.

Gentleman in Gray. So powerful.

Billionaire. Do you still want to help me? With your declaration that I am to sign?

Gentleman in Gray [*Pushing his newspapers, etc., still deeper into his pockets, breathing heavily*]. You've set me in a turmoil. The air's thick here. It presses the sweat out of one's paws.

Billionaire. Think it over at leisure.

Gentleman in Gray. It is too crazy—the 'Warm Heart of the Earth' . . . 'Open Thursday' . . . the results!

Billionaire. What results?

Gentleman in Gray. Chaos opens up.

Billionaire. It has already—therefore let

whoever can, save himself on the first spot of firm ground he can find.

Gentleman in Gray [*Almost shouting*]. Not you!

Billionaire. I have a son.

Gentleman in Gray. Let me out of here. Buzz for your servants. I can't find the door. Buzz for them, I tell you. [*The BILLIONAIRE does so. The two Servants come. The GENTLEMAN IN GRAY threateningly to the BILLIONAIRE*]. You've dashed my world to pieces—from under the ruins I curse you—I curse you. [*The Servants seize him roughly and take him out.*]

Secretary [*Coming in again*]. A radio from your son.

Billionaire. From land?

Secretary. No. From shipboard.

Billionaire. Is he on his way . . .

Secretary [*Reading*]. 'Just left . . .'

Billionaire. On the 'Freedom of the Seas', after all. [*The SECRETARY shakes his head*]. Can she have a sister-ship, then, as sumptuous?

Secretary. [*Goes on reading*]. 'On the Albatross.'

Billionaire. 'Albatross'? What sort of a ship is that?

Secretary. A coaler.

Billionaire. A . . . coaler? Does he explain? [*SECRETARY hesitates—hands him a telegraph. MILLIONAIRE reads it through*]. As stoker . . . [*Collapsing against the chair*]. What does it mean—my son . . . on a coaler . . . stoker . . . ?

ACT TWO

Under the awning on the deck of the BILLIONAIRE'S yacht. A section of the railing, rear. Heat mist over the calm sea.

In white-enamelled wicker armchairs—BILLIONAIRE, the DAUGHTER, the MUSEUM-DIRECTOR, the DOCTOR, the CAPTAIN, all in white. A negro sets out iced drinks. Off, the SINGER'S voice.

Singer. [*Lowering her voice on a long last note, comes in from the rear and trains her kodak on the group. Breaks off as she snaps*]. Thanks . . . [*The rest look up surprised*]. for the advertisement. On the high seas—aboard the most marvellous yacht in the world—and such an audience! We must have that on the record. Every opera-house on earth will compete for a contract with me. [*Dropping into*

a chair beside the BILLIONAIRE]. If you enjoyed hearing me—or am I mistaken? Tell me the truth—I have the picture, anyway.

Billionaire [In some embarrassment]. No, no, on the contrary, really extraordinary . . . [The others clap applause.]

Singer [Quickly snapping again]. Second photo—the applause. [Handing the negro her glass]. Hot lemonade.

Doctor. Just what I was going to suggest to you.

Singer. Ah, doctor, you don't know me—I'm everything, singer, impresario, and physician.

Museum Director. Then you are depriving two people of a livelihood.

Singer. Well, isn't that the secret of success?

Museum Director. You've good healthy nerves.

Singer. I've the most terrible nerves.

Doctor. Won't you explain that to me as a medical man?

Singer. I see ghosts.

Doctor. What sort of ghosts?

Singer. Just ghosts.

Doctor. That's more than I ever have.

Singer. Because you haven't an excitable temperament. Artists have—that's why they see ghosts.

Doctor. I see. Only artists, nobody else.

Singer. Let's ask round. It makes an entertaining game at sea. Each in turn now. [To the BILLIONAIRE]. Do you see ghosts?

Billionaire. I'm afraid we've no time just now to . . . [To the CAPTAIN]. Isn't the 'Albatross' about due to come within range now, Captain?

Captain. You can't quite calculate it with ships of that type.

Billionaire. Please. [The CAPTAIN goes.]

Doctor. What sort of a ship is this 'Albatross' really?

Billionaire. My son discovered it. It must have some very special points. Most likely a yacht belonging to some friend he met on his journey.

Daughter. We can challenge her to a race.

Singer. Thrilling! What a shame I've so few films with me.

Daughter. The loser to be rammed.

Doctor. Crew and all?

Daughter. Five minutes rescue time. [To the BILLIONAIRE]. Shall I go and tell the captain to prepare for the race?

Museum Director. Suppose the unknown 'Albatross' is too much for us?

Daughter. I shall stay on the bridge. I'll give the orders to the engineroom, and we'll pile on all the steam we can make.

Doctor. At this temperature.

Daughter. There'll be air up there.

Doctor. I was thinking of the engineroom.

Daughter [Stamping]. The upper deck is all I know about.

Billionaire. I don't think the 'Albatross' is faster than we—so the charm of the fight isn't there.

Daughter. What—my brother's chosen ship?

Billionaire. We'll leave the decision to him, then. He knows both sides. [The CAPTAIN comes back]. Sighted?

Captain. Not yet.

Billionaire [To his daughter]. You see, she's slow. [To the others]. Let's amuse ourselves meanwhile.

Singer. With the ghost game—good!

Billionaire [Hastily, to the MUSEUM DIRECTOR]. Is the Tintoretto really no good at all?

Museum Director. On the contrary—it is very fine, very fine indeed.

Billionaire. But you refused it when I offered it to you.

Museum Director [Nods]. Christ carrying the cross.

Singer. You object to the subject?

Museum Director. When I extend it to a matter of principle—yes.

Doctor. There'll be precious little place for old masters in your gallery in that case.

Singer [To the MUSEUM DIRECTOR]. Proceed with the lecture, won't you? I'll snap your audience as you arrive at the climax.

Museum Director. In the new museum I am to be the director of, my aim is to achieve a complete break with the past, however recent. I shall conduct my entire propaganda with this end in view.

Doctor. And what will you have left?

Singer. Empty walls.

Museum Director. Empty walls and practically nothing to cover them.

Doctor. Highly original museum.

Daughter. Indoor tennis-courts.

Museum Director. And that very circumstance will be a spur to new productions. Emphatically a beginning. Which means especially no more disapproving criticism based on comparisons with what has gone be-

fore. We are all sitting in that shadow—in one way or another it is a source of torment to us all. We must get into the full light of things again—and shake off these cross-carriings. At least that is how I see it. It is a burden on us—a cross that we are made to carry—this mass of the past from which we can only free ourselves by acts of violence—or even crimes, if it should come to that.

Doctor. And do you consider it possible then—without self-deceiving?

Museum Director. I don't know.

Doctor. I'm afraid the cross-carrying is inevitable.

Museum Director. One must truly desire the future.

Doctor. You might manage it in your gallery.

Museum Director. My ambition goes no further.

Doctor. But in real life I doubt very much whether anyone can jump beyond his shadow.

[A sailor comes with a report for the CAPTAIN, and goes.]

Captain [Standing up. To the BILLIONAIRE]. The 'Albatross' is close by on the starboard side.

Billionaire. [Excited]. Send the launch over. [CAPTAIN goes.]

Doctor. Now we shall know all about the mystery-ship.

Singer. And the matador.

Museum Director. My curiosity is at snapping-point.

Daughter. I'm going up to flash the challenge across.

Billionaire [Holding her back. To the others]. Please go ahead; we'll come in a moment. [SINGER, MUSEUM DIRECTOR, and DOCTOR go]. I want to talk to you a second first.

Daughter. Now?

Billionaire. It's only a question.

Daughter. What is it?

Billionaire. Could you consider—marrying the Museum Director?

Daughter. I—I don't know.

Billionaire. I want to urge you to decide, because . . .

Daughter. I hardly know him.

Billionaire. Nor I . . .

Daughter. Then how can you persuade me so?

Billionaire. I sat listening to him just now,

and he impressed me as no other person ever did.

Daughter. Because he rejected your gift?

Billionaire. I like his ideas. That inner independence—his philosophy which admits only the future and annihilates the past . . .

Daughter. I wasn't listening to him.

Billionaire. You would give me great joy . .

Daughter. Then it's superfluous to ask me to think it over.

Billionaire [Shakes her hands]. Now let us go and meet your brother. [They go.]

[Sound of bells and sirens. Sailors open the railing rear and let down the companion. Everybody comes back and leans over the railing. Handkerchiefs wave. Hellos.]

Doctor [Coming under the awning]. It's a clumsy old tub.

Museum Director. [Following him]. Does credit to the name of 'Albatross'.

Doctor. Could you see any other passengers aboard?

Museum Director. That may have been the charm of the voyage.

Doctor. Thanks, not for me!

Singer [Joins them, holding camera behind her back]. Discretion—family reunion!

[The SON, in a gray suit, comes up the stairway, and the daughter falls upon him with a storm of welcome. The CAPTAIN stands by at the salute.]

Son. Have you been lying in wait for me?

Daughter. Up and down this spot for three days. Glorious bore.

Billionaire. I planned a surprise for you.

Son. Well, you've succeeded brilliantly. Your guests?

Billionaire. A few intimates, that's all.

[The SON goes from one to the other and shakes hands in silence. Then he stands beside a chair, still without a word. The awkward silence continues.]

Daughter [Flinging herself into a chair]. Bit too solemn for me.

Billionaire [Indicating the chairs]. Please. [Everybody sits down, the SON last and hesitatingly. The CAPTAIN comes back and sits down too.]

Son [To him, astonished]. Aren't we going on?

Billionaire. I thought we might stay at sea another three or four days.

Son. Certainly, if you wished . . .

Billionaire. On your account.

Son. What for?

Billionaire. After your travels . . .

Daughter. I say, I quite forgot to look at the 'Albatross' in all the excitement. Is she very swell? How many knots? [*The MUSEUM DIRECTOR and the DOCTOR laugh.*]

Son. What's the matter with the 'Albatross'?

Daughter. We wanted to challenge her. Should we have had a good opponent?

Son. You're laughing at her. No, sister, the 'Albatross' isn't an opponent at all in the way you mean.

Daughter [*Surprised*]. Then why didn't you come on the 'Freedom of the Seas'?

Billionaire [*Uneasily, trying to change the subject*]. Well, what about your impressions of the world's great cities?

Singer. Did you visit the opera everywhere?

Son. We may as well define the 'Albatross's' class—she's a coaler. You must know all the ships on these roads, Captain?

Captain. I'm afraid the 'Albatross' had escaped me.

Son. Why? [*The CAPTAIN smiles. To the others*]. Why should it have? Don't other people travel on such ships?

Captain. They are not arranged for passengers.

Son. No, not for passengers. But what about the sailors. Aren't stokers people?

Musical Director [*After a pause*]. You understand the refinements of pleasure.

Son. What pleasure?

Museum Director. It is the antithesis between the coaler and this yacht that enables you to savour its luxury as never before.

Son. Or else to—[*Breaking off, and turning to the BILLIONAIRE*]. Did you have a report from my companion?

Billionaire. I did not speak to him.

Son. But he must have got back two days ago.

Billionaire. I've been lying out here for two days.

Son. Are you displeased with him? I take all the blame. He did all he could to prevent it.

Billionaire [*Avoiding the subject*]. Won't you change your clothes?

Daughter. That's a city suit you have on.

Son. It's a better protection against the coal-dust whirling about. And besides it was less noticeable—it's wiser to be part of the picture.

Billionaire. Do so then—go and get into white from head to foot like us.

Son. Please let me enjoy myself my own way.

Singer [*Busy with the camera*]. Most interesting pictorial effect.

Son. Is that the only way it strikes you?

Doctor. In this extreme heat white clothing is a matter of health.

Billionaire. There spoke our careful doctor—obey him.

Son [*With repressed sharpness*]. Would you expect your professional advice to be followed in the engineroom too?

Doctor. Scarcely.

Son. Because you don't enforce it there. Because of the black coal they work with.

Doctor. Exactly.

Son. Therefore health down there must suffer, while up here it must be taken care of?

Museum Director. You seem to have seen more things on your tour than you . . .

Son. When it is the first trip, one keeps one's eyes wide open.

Daughter. Did you meet any princes?

Singer. Tell us all about it.

Son. Every day.

Daughter. Have you made any friends? Is anyone coming to visit you soon?

Son. I could introduce five—ten—to you off my coaler. Come with me next time.

Museum Director. Is this another . . .

Son. Refinement of pleasure?

[*A sailor comes with a report to the CAPTAIN. The CAPTAIN goes to the DOCTOR and whispers to him. They go.*]

Son. Aren't we going on now?

Billionaire. I have given no orders.

Son. What did the doctor go off with the captain for?

Singer. One of the crew's had an accident, I expect.

Son. Wouldn't you like to take a snapshot of it?

Daughter. We might as well start moving—it would be one way of getting some air. This heat is really becoming unbearable.

Son. And we're on deck.

Singer. Is it cooler anywhere else?

Son. No—hotter.

Singer. Not possible!

Son. Go below into the stoke-hole.

Billionaire. Let's start going.

Museum Director [ironically]. Mind the stokers.

Son. Do you know what it means to be by those furnaces?

Museum Director. I have never sought the opportunity to try it.

Son. And a description would hardly interest you.

Museum Director. Oh, graphically done by an expert . . .

Son. I am an expert!

Billionaire [to the DAUGHTER]. Please go and tell the captain . . .

Daughter. Full steam ahead!

Singer. The ladies take over the command.

Daughter. Here's where we make a new record. We'll radio it to the papers tonight and tomorrow the whole world will burst with envy. [Goes off.]

Son. Won't you stop that wickedness?

Billionaire. The yacht has never shown her full capacity yet.

Son. Then I must ask you to drop me first.

Museum Director. The coaler has unaccustomed you to speed.

Son. No, to frivolity, perhaps.

Billionaire. You used to enjoy that sort of sport.

Son. I am ashamed to have come to a right mind so late.

Billionaire. What does that mean?

Son. That I . . . [Reflecting.] If I'm to take part in this record-making, I can only do it before the boilers.

Billionaire [to the MUSEUM DIRECTOR]. Don't keep the ladies waiting on the bridge. [The MUSEUM DIRECTOR goes. To his SON, slowly.] Did you really travel on that ship as a stoker?

Son. I couldn't hold out under it, so I had to become a passenger again.

Billionaire. Did it specially attract you to . . .

Son. Oh, the steamer is the least important part of it.

Billionaire. You saw much to wonder at in your travels.

Son. It was as though scales fell from my eyes. The wrongs we are committing stood up clearly before me. We rich here—and there the others, strangling in want and misery—but people like ourselves. There's not a spark of right in it—why do we do it? I ask you why? Give me an answer that ab-solves us both, you and I.

Billionaire [Staring at him.]. You ask me?

Son. Yes, and I shall never stop asking you. I have never been so grateful to you as now, never in my life. You gave me that trip, and but for it I should have stayed blind to the end of my days.

Billionaire. You will forget.

Son. Forget what is in me now, and fills me through and through? That will only disappear when I disappear too.

Billionaire. What is in you?

Son. The horror of that life which I have seen, with its toil and oppression.

Billionaire. Travel experiences are not enough to . . .

Son. Not enough?

Billionaire. You exaggerate superficial impressions.

Son. They burn in my blood. And the vividest picture of all is the 'Freedom of the Seas' as she lay in her wharf. Flags, music, passengers in light clothes strolling up and down the decks, chattering, gay. And a few yards underneath their feet, hell. Men feeding fire-belching holes, quivering bodies burning to death. So that we may make speed, speed. I had started to sail on that ship, I had set my foot on her deck—but I had to turn back—and only on that 'Albatross' I began to feel my conscience lighter.

Billionaire. And have you conquered all that now?

Son. Now I feel it more than ever. Here on this wonderful private yacht of yours. I feel the blood beating in my heart with shame. Look at us lying back in these chairs in indolence, wailing about the heat the sun pours down on us. We sip iced water for ease, and not a grain of dust irritates our throats. And underneath the soft soles of your white shoes here, there are men with boiling fever in their veins. Tear away this wall of wooden planks—see how thin it is, but yet how fearfully it divides—and look down, look down, all of you. And the words will stick in your mouths before any of you will brag before one of them down there. [The Doctor strolls in.]

Son. [Springing toward him.]. What was it, doctor?

Doctor. A yellow stoker collapsed.

Son. Dead?

Doctor [Shaking his head]. Heat-stroke.

Son. Where have you put him?

Doctor. I had him laid in front of a ventilator shaft.

Son. Not brought up here?

Doctor. No.

Son [briefly]. Wait here. [He goes.]

Doctor [Drops into a chair. To the NEGRO]. Ice water. [To the BILLIONAIRE]. I find this long drifting at sea extraordinarily quieting to the nerves. I'd like to prescribe it for you five days every other month. [BILLIONAIRE does not move.] I promise myself success with this new diet I've put you on. [BILLIONAIRE silent.] Of course we can't offer you the keen and healthful excitement of meeting your son again, but your daughter will be able to invent surprises of a more moderate kind for you. I'll talk to her about it. [Voices and footsteps approach. The Doctor puts down his glass.] Are they playing deck games? [SAILORS bring the half-naked yellow stoker.]

Son. This way.

Doctor [Standing up]. What does this mean?

Son. Set two chairs together. Take hold, doctor, this is a life and death matter. [To the SAILORS]. Lay him down. [To the NEGRO]. Ice water. [To the DOCTOR]. Come over here, doctor, you understand this better than I. Wash his chest. [To the BILLIONAIRE]. Will you allow your personal physician to lend a hand? [To the DOCTOR]. Is it dangerous?

Captain [Coming in—low, to BILLIONAIRE]. I couldn't prevent him.

[The BILLIONAIRE shakes his head decidedly. The DAUGHTER and the SINGER come in.]

Son [To the DAUGHTER]. Won't you help us here, sister? A man may be dying. [The DAUGHTER goes nearer]. Wet your hands in that ice water and lay them on his hot chest. I am only calling you to your simple duty. [The DAUGHTER does so. To the DOCTOR, beside himself.] Doctor, save him—you've got to, or I am a murderer!

Billionaire [Stares down at the group—his lips move—at last he mutters]. The horror!

Singer [Focussing her kodak—to the MUSEUM DIRECTOR]. I've never had pictures like these before. [She snaps.]

ACT THREE

Square room with rear wall of glass—the BILLIONAIRE'S work-room. Right and left on the walls, from the floor to the ceiling, huge brown-toned photographs of factories. Broad desk with swivel-chair; another chair at the side.

Smokestacks outside, close and straight like pillars of dead lava holding up cloud-mountains of smoke.

Billionaire [At the desk]. How many dead?

Secretary [Standing by the desk]. The exact number of victims could not be ascertained, for the men who were saved and brought into the light, rushed away and had not reported yesterday.

Billionaire. What did they do that for?

Secretary. They must have experienced untold horror the three days they were shut up under the ground.

Billionaire. And now they flee from it, farther and farther?

Secretary. They came up distracted as if from their graves, screaming and shuddering.

Billionaire. Whoever is absent from his place by the day after tomorrow will not be taken back again.

Secretary [Making a note]. By the day after tomorrow.

Billionaire. How did the meeting go? Was I contradicted? Was I allowed to speak without interruption?

Secretary. No.

Billionaire. Was my life in danger?

Secretary. It was indeed.

Billionaire. How did I protect myself?

Secretary. I had requisitioned troops. They were lined up before me ready to shoot.

Billionaire. Did anything happen?

Secretary. Only one man kept yelling interruptions.

Billionaire. What did he say?

Secretary. Murderer.

Billionaire. Was he not to be found?

Secretary. The crowd covered him.

Billionaire. Let him be found. Threaten to take steps if he is not delivered. [The SECRETARY makes a note.] Is everything quiet now?

Secretary. The shaft is being worked again today.

Billionaire. What means did I use?

Secretary. I announced the shutting down of the entire works.

Billionaire. Thanks. [A green lamp lights on the desk. BILLIONAIRE takes up the receiver. Surprised]. Who? . . . My daughter? . . . Here? . . . Yes, I will see her. [To the SECRETARY]. Replace me in Factory 24. There has been an explosion there—I said I would be down during the afternoon. [The

SECRETARY makes a note.] Thanks. [The SECRETARY leaves, left, through an invisible door. The BILLIONAIRE stands up, makes a few rapid steps toward the wall right, changes his mind, returns to his chair and plunges into his work. One of the servants opens a padded invisible door. The DAUGHTER enters. SERVANT goes. The BILLIONAIRE looks round.] Your first visit to your father's business house.

Daughter [Looking about]. Yes—I am seeing it for the first time.

Billionaire. Another world! . . . Is the matter so urgent that you couldn't keep it until this evening before the fire?

Daughter. I can only explain it to you here.

Billionaire. Am I to prepare myself for the most joyful news?

Daughter. What is that?

Billionaire. I asked something of you that day we were waiting for your brother . . . On the yacht.

Daughter [Shaking her head]. I have never given that another thought.

Billionaire [Suppressing his uneasiness. Gaily]. Really not?

Daughter. It was on the yacht that I first saw my way.

Billionaire. To your brightest happiness?

Daughter. To my inevitable duty.

Billionaire [Lifts his hand high in protest]. Not that!

Daughter [Calmly]. When I took my hands from the seething breast of that yellow stoker they were marked. The scar sank into my blood, into my deepest heart. I have no choice. I feel the call. And submit to it willingly. You will show me the place where I shall best obey it.

Billionaire. What do you want to do?

Daughter. Send me where the suffering is worst, to the injured in your factories. I will nurse them.

Billionaire. You don't know what you are saying.

Daughter. I do. You can at least respect my action by believing it. I want to go to the shaft where the catastrophe happened.

Billionaire. What catastrophe?

Daughter. You put down the agitation yourself.

Billionaire. Who carries you these tales?

Daughter. Reports in the papers are forbidden. Yes, I know you are powerful.

Billionaire [Stares at her. A pause]. Let it be. [He gets up and goes to her.] I shall not

ask you with words. You have a hundred to every one of mine. It is an unequal fight between father and daughter. The end is a foregone conclusion. [He takes her hands, looks intently at her.] No . . . no. Such little hands . . . such weak hands. [He anticipates her contradiction with a shake of the head.] Yes, yes . . . strong and hard. And only I know what for—to storm fortresses, to heap up ruins, and the victims under them. Shall I tell you who the victim is?

Daughter. Now I don't understand you.

Billionaire. Do you want to make me your victim? [DAUGHTER looks at him wonderingly.] Then turn back. You will find your task lies nearer home. Does it seem a paltry one to you? It seems important to me because it concerns your father.

Daughter [Drawing her hands away]. I have no right, while others . . .

Billionaire. Father and Daughter . . . not by quarrelling! Only by asking and yielding.

Daughter. I thank you today for the lovely years of youth . . .

Billionaire. And as lovely a future.

Daughter [Strongly]. Which will be a shining memory through my new life of duty. [She stands up and puts out her hand]. My decision was made so easily. Would you make it hard for me by having me change it?

Billionaire [Without taking her hand]. Where are you going now?

Daughter. To my sisters and brothers.

Billionaire [In a dead voice]. So that's where you're going . . .

Daughter. Will you still know me among the poorest of the poor?

Billionaire [Supporting himself against the desk]. You're going there . . . [The DAUGHTER hesitates . . . turns to the door. The SERVANT opens. DAUGHTER goes. The BILLIONAIRE falters . . . makes a timid gesture.] There . . . there . . . there . . . [Then pulls himself together and rings. The SECRETARY enters.] Shut down the shaft. [The SECRETARY makes a note.] No! [Clutching his brow]. It's here or there . . . it

can't be blown away . . . no one has power to do that! [Firmly to the SECRETARY]. My daughter wishes to dedicate herself to Samaritan work. You will meet her at the shaft and wherever accidents occur in my factories. Repudiate her . . . I know my daughter no longer.

Secretary. Does your daughter know about the coral?

Billionaire. No; besides the two servants, nobody knows. [*Business-like again*]. We were interrupted . . .

Secretary [*Reads from his notebook*]. In the afternoon I represent you at Factory 24.

Billionaire. Tomorrow at noon I shall attend the first half of the Missions meeting myself; I am to be appointed honorary president. Come in the car at two. Under the pretext of fetching something I shall leave the hall. You return in my place and read my contribution to them. I'll give you the papers. [*He looks for it in a drawer of the desk. The green lamp flashes*].

Secretary. Telephone. [*The BILLIONAIRE springs up—stares at the lamp*]. I'll come back later to . . .

Billionaire [*Brusquely*]. Stay here! . . . Go now. Yes . . . later. [*The SECRETARY goes. The BILLIONAIRE takes the receiver up slowly*]. Who . . . [*He lets it fall from his slack fingers onto the desk. His mouth quivers*]. My son . . . [*The SERVANT admits the SON and goes. The BILLIONAIRE stiffly erect goes towards him*]. I have not seen you the last few days.

Son. Since . . .

Billionaire. I am not asking where you were. The time is past for me to keep watch over your comings and goings. You must justify your actions to yourself now. You are grown up.

Son. You make it easy for me . . .

Billionaire. Perhaps it was important to tell you this. Is that what you came for?

Son. The reason . . .

Billionaire. I will not probe into you to find it out. Sit down. In this stern work-a-day room . . .

Son. Which you have always jealously kept me out of . . .

Billionaire. Is it your ambition to see yourself in my place?

Son. Not in yours.

Billionaire. I'll not offer it to you. I'm not tired yet. The strings are still taut in my fingers. I shall, and can, go on working. The successor arrives too early. You shall not dethrone me today, nor tomorrow either.

Son. That was not my intention.

Billionaire. It would help you to prepare your life accordingly.

Son. You narrow the field.

Billionaire. It is your only chance. The work is my share.

Son. I know how you mean to go on.

Billionaire. You see, the gates are well barred.

Son. I stand compelled, and therefore I must pacify my conscience?

Billionaire. A compulsion lies on you too.

Son [*After a pause*]. Will you answer certain questions that burn in me like fire?

Billionaire. If our boundaries are sharply drawn and understood—yes.

Son. Such deep contradictions split all your dealings.

Billionaire. Do you concern yourself with me?

Son. I can concern myself with nothing else.

Billionaire. What has made me so unexpectedly interesting?

Son. This monstrous wealth that you have assembled . . .

Billionaire. I have already mentioned my working-powers.

Son. That is not working-power, it is . . .

Billionaire. Wherein lies the riddle?

Son. Here the ruthless profits . . . and there the limitless charity that you give. The 'Warm Heart of the Earth' . . . and the stone that you must bear in your inmost soul.

Billionaire. I don't want to solve that riddle for you.

Son. Because shame of confessing it holds you back.

Billionaire. It shall remain my secret.

Son. I tear at the veil you hide behind. You know your wealth is a mortal sin, and stifle knowledge with your "Open Thursday."

Billionaire. The explanation would not suffice.

Son. No, these gifts of yours are absurd, ridiculous. You can't pay that way for the blood . . .

Billionaire. I shed?

Son. No, those are accidents. But you threaten with bloodshed when they dare to cry out.

Billionaire. Did you see that?

Son. Now I must confess what it nearly drove me to yesterday.

Billionaire. Why yesterday?

Son. I was at the shaft while you were speaking. You had to appear there yourself to put down that uprising. I was down below in that haggard crowd—and saw you standing there behind the menacing guns. So cold and

far away. Your words cracked down upon the gathering like bits of ice. No one dared to lift his voice again. Until you said the works would be shut down, and thousands—children and women—delivered up to hunger. That tore one mouth open.

Billionaire. So it was you . . .

Son. Cried out murder!— And that was not the last.

Billionaire. It was the last I heard.

Son. Could I have but forgotten that it was my father standing up there—[*He reaches into his pocket, then lays a revolver on the table.*] I do not wish to be tempted twice.

Billionaire [*Shoves the gun aside.*] You wouldn't have hit me.

Son. I meant to try it.

Billionaire [*Shaking his head and smiling.*] No, not me. So this need not stand as a shadow between us two. [*He puts out his hand.*] Don't let it bother you.

Son [*Staring at him.*] Do you puff it away like a grain of dust on your coat?

Billionaire. Not my coat.

Son. Forget and forgive?

Billionaire. So there was nothing to forgive.

Son. No, not for you. No one else can do that. Not that. One allots one's own atonement. And I will make mine so heavy that maybe on my dying day I shall dare to raise my eyes again.

Billionaire. To me?

Son. No, you've taken me back today. You've got no time to waste.

Billionaire. Then whom do you set over you as judge?

Son. The least of your workmen.

Billionaire. What does that mean?

Son. Until another's despair drives him to the same, I shall stand down there with them.

Billionaire. In the uprising?

Son. In the peace that will be spread around if I become one with them all, and no more than the least of them.

Billionaire [*Pushes the revolver towards him.*] The time is now. [*He turns his face away.*]

Son [*Jumps up and runs to him.*] Oh, tell me why all this should be—tell me why.

Billionaire. Come. [*He leads him to the photographs.*] See there? Grey factories. Narrow yards. [*Crossing to the great window rear.*] Do you see that? Where is the earth here—grass blades—bushes—? From such as this I came. . . Do you know my life?

I have kept it hidden from you. But it is read in all the schools. I had another life for you to live, and I have let you live it. Yours, not mine. . . I came up out of nothing, so the books say. . . I swung myself up out of that very poverty here—I tell you this now. And I have never forgotten it. Not for a single hour have I allowed myself to drowse. I set these pictures about me—I made this wall of glass so that none of that might be hidden—it was to goad me into wakefulness should I ever fall weary and seek to rest. It was for warning and admonition in my blood—only not down again—not down again to that.

Son [*Withdrawing from him.*] You . . .

Billionaire. I can warn you, you'll believe me. It swallowed up my father and my mother. Its arm was already grasping after me—but I escaped.

Son. You know . . .

Billionaire. A single moment upset you. I have shuddered before it for a lifetime. So terrible is life. . . Do you wish to go down there?

Son. You tear the very last thing out of my hands. . .

Billionaire. What is that?

Son. My only excuse for you—that never having known, you could not grasp the suffering of others.

Billionaire. I bear the cry within my breast.

Son. Are you a tiger? Worse, for the tiger knows not what he does. You know the torture of your victims . . . and. . . . [*He grasps the gun, but lays it down again.*]

Billionaire. I or another. . .

Son. Everyone is. . .

Billionaire. Be thankful to me.

Son. For this?

Billionaire. That you need never be who I am.

Son [*Calmly.*] Your blood is mine. . .

Billionaire. Do you feel it too?

Son. It makes the task worth while.

Billionaire. Of saving me from the pursuing horror?

Son. Of stifling these terrible desires, and holding steadfast by the side of the humblest of your employees. [*BILLIONAIRE stands stiffly.*] You can't prevent it. I shall take work wherever I can find it.

Billionaire [*Collapsing at his feet.*] Mercy . . . mercy!!

Son [*Coldly.*] Upon whom?

Billionaire. Mercy! . . .

Son. And that may be my cry to you on the day you deny me and my comrades bread. [*Before the SERVANTS have the door fully open, he is gone, right.*]

Billionaire [*Bounding up at last. He looks for the revolver and thrusts it into his pocket.*] Not here . . . in the heart of the woods. Green bowers for the glazing eyes, a bit of blue heaven fluttering down, tinkle of little birds. [*Glancing sideways at the walls.*] Stopped? Cut off? . . . Failed in the fight? . . . Overtaken? . . . [*Swinging his arms about.*] Let me go! . . . Don't touch me! . . . With a child's terror I fear you, all of you! [*He runs around the line of photographs, panting, beating upon them with his hands.*] A way out. . . . A way out. . . . [*Screaming.*] A way out! [*SECRETARY enters from left. Looks questioningly. BILLIONAIRE stares at him.*]

Secretary [*Embarrassed.*] You're—papers? [*The BILLIONAIRE is silent.*] You wish to give me some papers?

Billionaire [*Staggering to the desk and collapsing in a chair.*] Daughter and son . . . down . . . down. My children have deserted me. [*SECRETARY silent. BILLIONAIRE glances up at him.*] Do you understand what it means to have worked for your children all your life long—and then to have them come to you, their father, and knock the whole thing out of your hands?

Secretary. Your son?

Billionaire [*Crying out.*] Who will help now to pull down mountains—to cover this? [*The SECRETARY looks at him inquiringly.*] Will no one help me now out of the darkness of my past?

Secretary. Your achievements are so gigantic, your past needs no embellishment.

Billionaire. No. . . ?

Secretary. Your work stands out the greater for it.

Billionaire. I give it up—I'll pay with all my riches—I'll give my life in exchange for any other man's [*Full of deep feeling.*] Who'll lend me a life that was bright from its first days on? In my son I can find that no more—down. . . . Where is the exchange I have longed for and wooed in the fever of work and the rage for possession—on the heights of my mountainous riches? . . . In whom can I now sink myself and lose this fear, this

turmoil that destroy me? Whose life—smooth and good life—for mine?

Secretary [*Looking down at him with growing emotion.*] Your son has chosen another way. No disappointment is bitterer. But as it repeats itself so many thousandfold, it is as if it were a law. Father and son strive away from each other. It is always a struggle of life and death. [*Pause.*] I opposed my father too, and although I felt the hurt it was to him, yet I was forced to hurt him. . . . [*After another pause.*] I don't know yet what it was that drove me to it. The desire to try out life myself—perhaps it was that. The need to stand alone is stronger than everything else. [*With heightened animation.*] There are few homes like mine. I have a wonderful youth to look back upon. I was an only son. Mother and father lavished an infinite treasure of love upon me. And in the shelter of their care I saw and heard nothing of the wretchedness and irritations of everyday. Sunlight lay on all our quiet rooms. Even death passed us by. My parents—even today, they still live only for me. Then I passed into the little university, and the urge for independence began to possess me. I broke away and went into the world. . . . I have been through many a dark hour. Buffeted here and there—but deep down nothing could shake me, for I possessed the greatest riches of all, endless and inexhaustible—the living memory of a happy childhood. Whatever might come later could be only waves upon the surface of a lake whose clearness mirrored the blue of heaven. So untroubled, so calm, within me lies that perfect past.

[*The BILLIONAIRE has raised his face toward him. He listens with deepest intentness. The SECRETARY gazes into space.*]

Billionaire. [*Looking about the table.*] The papers. [*SECRETARY gives them to him. He speaks with a great effort.*] Go. [*The SECRETARY takes the papers, turns to the door. The BILLIONAIRE pulls the revolver out of his pocket and presses the trigger. His SECRETARY, shot through the back, falls. The BILLIONAIRE stands immobile.*] My life—for another's . . . that was bright . . . from the first day on. . . . [*Goes slowly forward to the body and bends down . . . slips the coral off the watch-chain. Holds it before him on his open palm.*] This is the life I thirst for . . . every day

of this life. . . . I covet and long for. [*Flings back his head.*] Those bright days shall make me happy. . . . [*He slips the coral on his watch-chain. Then wrenches open the door and shoots again into the air. The two SERVANTS rush in. One remains in the doorway standing—the other bends over the SECRETARY.*]

First Servant [*In the doorway.*] The coral?

Second Servant [*Kneeling upright, shaking his head.*] Arrest the Secretary.

ACT FOUR

Room of examining magistrates—blue square with many entrances by iron-barred doors behind which narrow passages lose themselves. A hanging lamp of clear glass lights the place brightly. One small iron table at which the clerk—with eye-shade—is seated.

The FIRST JUDGE is standing in an attitude of reflection. The two SERVANTS, left. GUARD comes in, right.

First Judge. Put the light out.

[*GUARD strides to switchboard, the lamp goes out. Frosted lamps glow in the corners.*]

First Judge [*Goes to the table and takes up the receiver.*] Relief, please. [*To the SERVANTS.*] You may now . . . [*on second thoughts.*] Or wait another minute or two. [*He has the clerk give him the dossier, reads, shakes his head. To the SERVANTS.*] Did the secretary ever allow the coral to . . . [*Quickly.*] It is possible that the coral had been exchanged for once, to . . . [*The SECOND JUDGE comes in, rear.*]

Second Judge. No result.

First Judge [*Gives him the papers.*] Nothing more than that I now have certain doubts.

Second Judge. There's something like genius in the consistency with which he persists in masking his person.

First Judge. His silence is certainly consistent enough.

Second Judge. He does not respond to the most obvious inquiries as to his earlier life—after all the foundation of every examination. But he receives them all as though he himself did not know. We have had to gather the data all ourselves.

First Judge. Yes, it seems as unknown to him as though he heard of his own life today for the first time.

Second Judge. Is he simply leading us on . . .

First Judge. What do you mean by that?

Second Judge. Are we to preach his past to him?

First Judge. To what end?

Second Judge. To wear us out.

First Judge. He's almost done that to me already.

Second Judge [*Reads—lets the sheet fall.*] He does not argue the point about the coral having been found on him.

First Judge. But he refuses to admit he's the secretary.

Second Judge. Then how does he explain the coral on his watch-chain. [*Reading.*] "This repeated question the prisoner consistently refuses to answer."

First Judge [*To SERVANTS.*] Was there never a plan to confuse you in the same connection for certain purposes?

First Servant. No. Our task would have been impossible if there had been.

Second Servant. The murdered man set great store by the personal watch he set over his person.

Second Judge. It's perfectly transparent to me. Of course, it's a matter of the fellow's neck. That's a thing one rather jibs at. But we have the son's affidavit. In the conversation that had taken place just before between father and son, the son renounced his father's riches. The daughter renounced it too. The secretary had heard the excited talk next door and could not withstand the temptation to make himself their successor. So he made no bones about it and went ahead. Only the coral he hadn't time to exchange, though he would have liked to. [*To the SERVANTS.*] The shot brought you there at once.

Second Servant. I got him as he was trying to make it out of the door.

Second Judge. Did he try to get away?

First Servant. We didn't open the door—he did.

First Judge. Why should he run away when he gives himself out for the one who was attacked?

Second Judge [*Puts the dossier down.*] That very attempt at flight proves it. The report made more noise than he had reckoned with. He was bewildered and expected to get away, but the plan was knocked to pieces by the servants' watchfulness. Now he has to recall the part he first meant to play.

First Judge. But the resemblance is extraordinary, anyway. I've never experienced such a case of doubles.

Second Judge. Yes, if it weren't for the coral, we should be groping in the dark and never find a way out. [*Seizing the papers.*] Besides, how does he account for the attack which is alleged to have been made by the secretary?

First Judge. He says nothing.

Second Judge. Because there never was such an attack.

First Judge. But you said he wished to put himself in the murdered man's place.

Second Judge [*Wavers*]. So that would be a reason, wouldn't it?

Second Judge. To prompt him to kill.

First Judge. So he acted under stress.

Second Judge [*Excited*]. But he is the secretary.

First Judge [*Rubbing his eyes*]. I am really worn out. The sharp light—the passiveness of that man who hardly bothers to defend himself —

Second Judge. I am thinking of disposing of certain means to make him more active. If showing him the coral has no effect . . . [*He picks it up from the table.*] The thing looks like a drop of blood still hanging onto the murderer. . . . [*He lays it down.* *To the SERVANTS.*] I don't need you any longer.

First Servant. What time tomorrow?

Second Judge. Let's hope this is the last. Ten times over the same litany. If you're needed, I'll send for you. [*They go.*]

First Judge. Do you promise yourself better success tonight?

Second Judge. Nothing more than a full confession.

First Judge [*Taken aback*]. How do you expect to bring him to that?

Second Judge. He insists he's the billionaire. Very well, I'll bring his children to face him. Now nature can be the judge. If he hesitates a single moment to approach them—for we know by their own testimony that he loved his son and daughter above everything—then he has as good as confessed. He can face the coral—it's a dead object—but before the weight of his victim's son and daughter's eyes nobody could stand up. And as he is no professional criminal, I'll have him break down like a straw.

First Judge. Honestly, I'm completely played out.

Second Judge. Stretch out on the sofa and have a good sleep. If you don't mind my disturbing you, I'll shout the news of our deliverance from this fortnight's martyrdom across to you.

First Judge. I'll go straight to the country for a week.

Second Judge. And I'll write a book about the case—popular edition of several hundred thousand! [*FIRST JUDGE goes off.* *SECOND JUDGE goes towards left and rings a bell beside a door. Led in by a GUARD, the SON and DAUGHTER in black—left.*] It is after all necessary that I bring you actually to confront the man. Gladly as I would have spared you this painful experience, the obstinate denial which my colleague has been unable to break down in him forces me to this step. I see no other way to get a confession out of him. And we must have the confession absolutely.

Son. Instruct us how we are to behave.

Second Judge. I intend to deal a surprise blow. He must not be allowed the least time for reflection. I must ask you to come absolutely noiselessly and not in any way to betray your presence here. For the present wait there in the back of the corridor—the guard stands round about the door. That won't strike him as peculiar. [*To GUARD.*] During the hearing I shall arrange to come this side so that the prisoner will have his back to your door. As soon as I pull out my handkerchief, admit the lady and gentleman.

Son. Is our task over when we have confronted him?

Second Judge. Obviously, I shall see that it last no longer than it must. But try to look at him intently. That is important. Especially you, madam, I should like to impress this upon. Take hold of yourself. You are about to experience the most horrible thing one could well encounter. You will think you are looking at your father who is dead.

Son. But some distinction must be possible.

Second Judge. We should have had it easy, then. The resemblance is complete. No bodily mark exists. Nature has played this trick on us.

Son. Only that coral can decide?

Second Judge. And irrevocably. Therefore do not forget that you have the secretary before you. [*SON and DAUGHTER off left with the GUARD. The GUARD comes back and waits behind the iron-barred door. To the FIRST*

GUARD.] Bring him in. [*The GUARD switches on the light. Off right SECOND JUDGE puts on blue-glass spectacles. GUARD lets the BILLIONAIRE precede him into the room and remains at the door. His hands are bound in front of him with thin steel rope. He prepares to stand as he is now accustomed to do—without a sign of excitement. SECOND JUDGE for the moment does not notice him. Then he takes the revolver from the table and goes—merely interested in the weapon—to the BILLIONAIRE.*] Where do you buy this make? [*BILLIONAIRE is silent.*] I'd like one myself. But I can't very well pinch one that the law has confiscated. [*BILLIONAIRE smiles thinly.*] A close-kept secret?

Billionaire. A present.

Second Judge. Indeed? Who from?

[*BILLIONAIRE shakes his head.*] Surely from no tender hand.

Billionaire. From the tenderest.

Second Judge. Oh, come, that is unnatural.

Billionaire. Yes—it was unnatural.

Second Judge. Was it for you to use on yourself if ever you should be untrue?

Billionaire. I was the target.

Second Judge. Who wanted to shoot you?

[*BILLIONAIRE slowly nods his head.*] Did you tear the weapon out of his hand?

Billionaire. He put it down on the desk.

Second Judge [*Quickly*]. The Billionaire?

[*BILLIONAIRE silent. The SECOND JUDGE nods with relief and goes to the right.*] Let's reconstruct the situation. Turn towards me. [*BILLIONAIRE does so.*] Wait a bit. The metal's got a bit dull—it must have shone rather before. [*He pulls out his handkerchief and rubs it. The GUARD left, moves back from the door.*]

The Second Judge. Of course it's all poppycock about the gun lying about on the table. In fact your whole story is so completely muddled that there's no use trying to grope for sense in it any more. The long and short of the matter is this: under some pretext or other you got behind your victim's back, pulled the gun out of your trousers pocket, and stood all set and ready, exactly as you see me standing now, with this same distance between you—[*The GUARD has come in with the SON and DAUGHTER. They stand waiting.*] Turn your back!

The Billionaire [*Turns around. Without hesitation he goes toward his SON and DAUGHTER*]. Children! In black? Has there been a

death—close to us? You wonder why I don't know of it. I am out of touch with you all for the present, locked up under the strictest watch. An intolerable error that must be cleared up first. I am all imaginable pains to destroy this dreadful suspicion. But the courts are conscientious. Every trifle has weight. A bit of coral that was found on me—the revolver there which I am supposed to have carried in my pocket. [*To the SON.*] Will you not explain where it came from?

Son [*Mastering his agitation*]. It is my property, sir.

Second Judge. How did it come into the secretary's possession?

Son. I laid it on the table by my father.

Second Judge. Valuable information. The revolver, lying on the open table-top, prompted the deed. What did you give it to your father for?

Son. I—cannot answer that question.

Billionaire. I have not betrayed you, either.

Son [*Sharply*]. Because you know nothing about it.

Billionaire. You seem to be talking to someone else, not to me. Have I become a stranger to you because I stand under suspicion? [*With a strangely watchful expression.*] Do you both believe I am the secretary? You—my own children—are you seeing the secretary in me?

Son [*Wearily*]. Sir, do you need my sister and me here any longer? [*The DAUGHTER screams—covers her face with her hands.*]

Second Judge. I thank you, no. [*The SON, supporting the DAUGHTER, go. The JUDGE walks up and down the room.*] Monstrous. The utmost extreme of stubbornness!—Are you not ashamed? [*Disconcerted.*] Smiling, are you?

Billionaire. I saw my children —

Second Judge. Do you take pleasure in other people's torment?

Billionaire. But they did not see me.

Second Judge. They saw the murderer of their father. You are he. You—his secretary. Don't bring your idiotic fairy-tale forward again, please—we know it. And were the coral not the powerful proof it is, this would have unmasked you—that those two whom you brazenly pretended were your children, rejected you as an utter stranger.

Billionaire [*Imperviously*]. That—does not suffice.

Second Judge. Are you sure? Because you

refuse your confession? We excuse you that now. You may continue to shroud yourself in your monumental silence. The time has come for us to speak! [*He signs to the GUARD who leads the BILLIONAIRE away. The JUDGE telephones.*] Relief, please. [*Loudly.*] Yes—relief! [*Goes excitedly up and down. Stamps angrily.*] This is . . . [*FIRST JUDGE hastens in, rear.*] You thought you heard wrong, I expect. No, there's no change. The man is not to be caught. He confronts them without a tremor—and finds fault with them for talking coldly to him. [*The FIRST JUDGE reads.*] We're done now, I think.

First Judge. No. I'm for pressing him hard—this thing interests me. [*Striking his brow.*] Simple as daylight!

Second Judge. Were you enlightened in a dream?

First Judge. I am furious.

Second Judge. Hardly the state of mind for brilliant discoveries.

First Judge. He's transsubstantiated himself into the billionaire.

Second Judge. And expects to stay there.

First Judge. Therefore we must now reverse the process —

Second Judge. Abracadabra—one, two, three.

First Judge. And get him back into the secretary.

Second Judge. By what sleight of hand do you mean to effect this?

[*The GUARD comes in at the right and switches off the arc-light.*]

First Judge. He must be born all over again!—That's it! I'll put him back in his cradle and let him kick and crow as happy as the day's long. So far the Billionaire has never entered his life—that is a later chapter not to be recalled by a single syllable. I'll set him up such a hole-proof picture of his life and wrap him so gently and gradually in childhood recollections that he shall entirely forget what he's here for. [*Searching through the papers.*] We've all the material here—not a detail missing. A strikingly bright and happy past, too; he hasn't hardened all the way through yet. I shall have him as soft as butter once I start bringing his good days back to him.

Second Judge. He didn't mind facing his victim's children —

First Judge. Children are something else.

In the last resort it is one's own life that counts.

Second Judge. I should hate to give up the case as hopeless.

First Judge. Everything we've tried so far has fallen through, and my attempt may do the same. But there is a certain power of suggestion in delving into the past.

Second Judge. Would you like the glasses?

First Judge. We'll have the lights down this time. [*To GUARD.*] Don't switch on the light. Bring him in. [*GUARD goes, right.*] That alone will be a kindness to him. And for the rest I shall find the right "Now Granny will tell you a story" tone.

Second Judge. With the wicked wolf at the end.

First Judge. That gets hold of the murderer. [*The SECOND JUDGE goes. The GUARD comes in with the BILLIONAIRE. The FIRST JUDGE is deep in the documents before him.*] This love of animals is truly beautiful. [*Glancing up at the BILLIONAIRE.*] Had it really a black spot in the middle of its forehead? [*The BILLIONAIRE raises his head obediently.*] The puppy you saved from drowning. The river was pretty shallow there, I daresay? One doesn't venture very far out at ten years old. [*The BILLIONAIRE breathes heavily.*] Just a bit of a stream running by the little town, wasn't it? No strong current, of course—or did the tides run high in spring? [*The BILLIONAIRE begins to sway curiously from the waist.*] Then the water would go sweeping by with all sorts of bushes and things it had uprooted, and sometimes it flooded the banks and got into the cellars. That meant saving the family stores, and what a jolly salvaging party it always was! Father and Mother at it as hard as they could go and the boy helping like a Trojan, naturally. Always in everybody's way, but convinced that he was being absolutely indispensable, eh? [*The BILLIONAIRE nods slowly.*] Yes—a little bit of a town like that has its catastrophes too. Every day a different one. The wind pulls the cap off a fellow's head and rushes round the corner with it — [*Suddenly.*] What colour was your school-cap—green?

Billionaire [*With a chuckling smile.*] I've . . .

First Judge. You don't remember the colour distinctly?

Billionaire. I've . . . forgotten so much.

First Judge [*Sharply watching him. After*

a pause]. Doesn't that sort of thing last long with you? I mean one usually likes to recall one's pleasant times long after they're gone. After all, they're our only indestructible possession. You especially could refresh yourself with your remembrances, for the picture of your past is remarkably charming and bright. Yes, you had an enviable youth. [*Turning over the documents.*] It is a pleasure even to read about it. [*BILLIONAIRE stealing a look into the papers.*] Light and sunshine—sunshine and light. No trace of a shadow anywhere. [*Glancing up.*] You must be inexpressibly grateful to your parents, aren't you?

Billionaire [*In a tone almost like singing.*] My parents. . . .

First Judge. I see them with their hands outspread over their only child in a gesture of infinite love. Did they ever once strike you?

Billionaire. Did they . . . never once strike me?

First Judge. Yes, tell me.

Billionaire. Yes . . . you tell me.

First Judge [*Looks at him in astonishment. Then jestingly.*] Very well, let us now open the Book of the Past. Chapter one—The Home. A little provincial town set in a pleasant green landscape. Father—pastor. Do you see him now?

Billionaire [*Groping before him.*] . . . set in a green landscape . . . Father . . . pastor . . .

First Judge. Chapter two—The son is born and becomes the centre of life at the parsonage. Every care is lavished on him. He waxes and thrives. . . . You will hardly remember your very earliest childhood?

Billionaire. Now . . . I remember.

First Judge. In the next section you're fairly under way. School-days. The school is not large . . . there are few pupils, and you are the best among them. Learning comes easily to you . . . you encounter no obstacles . . . this period is a thornless path. Or perhaps you remember a cloud?

Billionaire. If you know of none . . .

First Judge. Good, then there was none. Let's go on. This, then, was the frame in which your life was set. It is seldom that a young man has things made as smooth for him as they were for you . . . and your own inclinations met your parents' plans half way. To a rare degree you developed the capacity for becoming a happy man. I can think of

nothing finer than this complete harmony between a person and his environment. No disrupting experience to poison the blood . . . only the quiet succession of days like flowers on the chains children weave! . . . [*Intensely.*] Doesn't it flood your heart with warmth to hear me recite this evangel of your past to you? It must awaken in you such wistful longing for that paradise you used to wander in . . . in your so cherished and favoured youth. Sheltered and loved—protected against the blows that others have to suffer even at that age. It is like looking into a crystal sea, clear down to the very bed where only bright round pebbles lie on the white sand and nothing else. Say yes to that happy past of yours—and save the most precious of all possessions.

Billionaire. . . . the best . . . of all possessions. . . .

First Judge [*In growing excitement.*] Do you say yes to that past?

Billionaire [*Faintly breathing the words.*] Yes . . . yes . . . yes! . . .

First Judge. Now you will sign your deposition.

Billionaire [*Already raising his hand.*] Yes.

First Judge [*To GUARD.*] Undo his hand. [*To the BILLIONAIRE.*] Your acquiescence has convicted you. That past is the secretary's. You are the secretary. [*As the BILLIONAIRE hesitates.*] I am telling you this so that you sign correctly—with the secretary's name. [*The BILLIONAIRE writes in the air.*] What are you doing? Can't you remember your own handwriting any more? [*The BILLIONAIRE signs.*] The examination is closed. I hope that you will not return again to your former denial of your identity. From now on it would be useless. [*He signs to the GUARD.*]

The Billionaire [*As the GUARD leads him out, right.*] . . . The best . . . the best . . . [*He goes.*]

First Judge [*Stands thinking. Then telephones.*] Comprehensive confession.

Second Judge [*Entering.*] It sounds like a fairy-tale really. [*Reads in the dossier.*] Worked like a charm. Didn't he see the trap you were decoying him into?

First Judge [*Ruminating.*] Don't you think it extraordinary?

Second Judge. He was overtired.

First Judge. That was not my impression. In fact he seemed to come to life as he listened

to his past. [*THE GUARD enters, right. Quickly.*] Has he anything to tell me?

Second Judge. Hasn't he already gone back to the other?

Guard. No.

Second Judge. Has he gone to pieces?

Guard. He stands up straight, looking upwards and muttering.

First Judge. Just as he did here . . . in a dream. . . .

Second Judge [*After a silence.*] Well, there's a terrible awakening in store for him.

ACT FIVE

Small square yard sunk between the shafts of prison-walls on four sides. Patch of mean grass with iron bench in the centre, fastened into the ground. A low door left and a high, narrow door rear

GUARD leads BILLIONAIRE in from the left, a convict now in black linen with red neckband.

Billionaire. The ante-yard of death?

Guard. You have an hour to stay here.

Billionaire [*Nods.*] The last short hour has struck. [*Looking about.*] A gentle custom . . . feet tread upon green grass and heaven's blue streams overhead. [*He stands motionless.*]

Guard. Do you wish to see your visitors?

Billionaire. Ah—the curious have come? I shall not resist. [*GUARD goes. BILLIONAIRE sits on the bench. GUARD admits the MAN IN GRAY, and goes.*]

Man in Gray [*Has undergone an obvious transformation. His suit—the same colour as before—is immaculately tailored. He wears light spats over patent leather shoes, gray top hat with rounded crown, white kid gloves with black stitching. Comes rushing in at the BILLIONAIRE, stretching out his hand.*] Still in time. This is luck indeed. I should have put in an appearance before this, but business, you know. . . . Brimstone mine . . . big thing. Yearly profits of . . . But for the moment you're rather out of that world of income and dividends and so forth, of course. Besides I didn't come here to talk to you on that subject. I came to thank you.

Billionaire. I didn't know . . .

Man in Gray. You don't mind if I sit down beside you, do you . . . on the bench of repentance. One can have at least a quarter of an hour's peace and quiet. Well,

then, from the bottom of my heart, thanks, thanks, and thanks again.

Billionaire. I wish you would tell me.

Man in Gray. I am the Man in Gray who came to you once with a manifest that was to give harmony to all the world at one single stroke—and you refused to sign it. At the same time—the thing I find most admirable about it now is that you should have taken the time; I shouldn't have—you demonstrated to me the hopelessness of my beneficent project. Your arguments struck me like the blows of a club . . . and I left the 'Warm Heart of the Earth,' hurling curses back at you strong enough to fell an ox. Is it getting dark?

Billionaire [*With a thin smile.*] You are mistaken.

Man in Gray. I wished you straight into the deepest pit of hell.

Billionaire. Not me. . . .

Man in Gray. You never felt the impact?

Billionaire. Because the conversation you refer to was with the Billionaire, not with me.

Man in Gray [*Laughs unrestrainedly.*] You need not play your rôle before me. Just put your secretary in your pocket. Or perhaps you haven't one in these pyjamas they put you in for the night without end? [*Tapping him on the shoulder.*] You're still my man fleeing from the terror.

Billionaire [*Taken aback.*] Don't talk so loud.

Man in Gray. Don't worry—I shall neither betray you nor set you free. Surely I have no cause for such an act of ingratitude. Are you satisfied with me?

Billionaire. You are the only one. . . .

Man in Gray. Your trial was a pleasure to me. I wouldn't have disturbed it at any price. It was a stroke of genius to shove yourself into the secretary's skin and lap up the candy of his bright past. I could hear your lips smacking as they kept stuffing you with that glorious grub. How does your stomach feel now—good?

Billionaire. It was salvation.

Man in Gray. While the son—that rebirth you'd arranged for yourself, all peace and joy. and so forth—turned away from you.

Billionaire. Not a word of that!

Man in Gray. But you have no more to fear now. And from the safe bank one can look back over the turbulent sea with a malicious joy that is wholesome too. You've saved

yourself—and in a few minutes your head won't be in danger from it any more. You can be sure of that.

Billionaire. What do you thank me for?

Man in Gray. Does not a casual glance upon my outer man tell you that?

Billionaire. You are dressed with a sort of challenging splendour.

Man in Gray. Merely to illustrate the inner structure. I'm in flight.

Billionaire. You? From what?

Man in Gray. From the world as you made it.

Billionaire. Then are you not going to curse me again?

Man in Gray. I bless you. You took me out of my pink clouds and set me on sober earth. Bolt upright on both feet. Your law ruled—flight! Woe to the stumbler, tramp him down. The flight surges over him, on and away. No grace, no mercy. Forward—forward! . . . Chaos is behind!

Billionaire. And did you gain on it?

Man in Gray. I was a good pupil. I heap up riches and set that glittering hill between them and me. Immense energy develops when once the law is known. Even in sleep one races on and springs out of bed in the morning with new plans ready. A wild chase. Thank heaven you did not take your secret with you to the grave—now I can announce to all mankind its true salvation.

Billionaire. Will you do that?

Man in Gray. It is already done. My leavings set them all wildly scrambling. All bonds snapped, the fight rages all along the line. Each against each, no hope for quarter.

Billionaire. And what is the goal you are storming towards?

Man in Gray. Nonsense, there is no goal.

Billionaire. But there is.

Man in Gray [*Looks at him disconcerted*]. Don't torture me.

Billionaire. It lies in the beginning.

Man in Gray. Yes—you had all the luck. You can afford to laugh at us. Besides you removed the cause that spurs on the race. But that remains a single instance—we can't all find a double in this world. . . . And I'll tell you something, too. [*With a gesture round his neck*]. And most of us would shy at the price too.

Billionaire. Do you call it high?

Man in Gray. [*Standing up*]. You can best estimate that yourself according to your own

measure. You were never pettifogging when it came to paying the bill. I should like to stay longer, but . . . your time is limited too. Anyway let it be some joy to you that your great discovery will not vanish with you. [*Offering both his hands*]. Head up, then!

Billionaire. As long as it lasts.

Man in Gray [*Laughs. Waving his hat*]. Au revoir!

Billionaire. Where?

Man in Gray. Well—what is the correct leave-taking in a case like this anyway! [*The GUARD opens the door rear. The MAN IN GRAY goes. The BILLIONAIRE sits on the bench without moving, his chin on the back of his hand. The GUARD admits the SON. GUARD goes.*]

The Son [*Hesitates—then goes quickly to the BILLIONAIRE, reaching out his hand*]. I have come—to forgive you. [*The BILLIONAIRE looks slowly up at him*]. Don't you recognize me?

Billionaire. Oh, yes.

Son. My decision has taken you by surprise. Perhaps it is strange that a son should do such a thing. But that is the least. I want to save you.

Billionaire. Have you climbing-irons and rope-ladder all ready?

Son. I will recognize you as my father. [*The BILLIONAIRE stands up and goes behind the bench*]. Don't make it harder for me than it is already. I am as guilty as you, for I had aimed that gun at him, I had meant that very bullet for him, too. It's of no importance who it was that fired.

Billionaire. This is all incomprehensible to me.

Son. Believe me guilty with you, so that I need not flounder any longer in these frightful things.

Billionaire. But have you considered what I did?

Son. You did what we must all do at the sight of madness dancing in power.

Billionaire. Was your father mad?

Son. Power is madness.

Billionaire. Yes . . . he was powerful.

Son. And guilty! Behind your guilt stands his—colossal and inextinguishable. You are his victim as I am—as all others who think at all.

Billionaire. And do they all desire to kill?

Son. They must—the compulsion is not to be withstood. The temptation comes from those who thrust themselves above them. By

force they rise, by force they shall be torn down.

Billionaire. You make it easy for yourself . . .

Son. Did not my final confirmation come from you? I know your life—I read the reports breathlessly as they appeared. The sweetest childhood, the gentlest youth—where was there a sign of impulse to violence?

Billionaire. Your childhood was no less sweet . . .

Son. And yet I sought a weapon when the time came. I meant to punish, being swept away by my sense of justice—you meant to enrich yourself. The sight of force seduced you. My father set you the example—he always acted regardless of others—and so long as such examples are before us, so long will we be tempted.

Billionaire. Do you mean to wipe out evil example—is that it?

Son. With your help.

Billionaire. What can I do?

Son. You are to renounce your position so high above the rest of us and come down to our level.

Billionaire. Your father should do this, you mean.

Son. I shall go to the judge and declare that from this conversation with you I realized that you were my father after all.

Billionaire. And the coral?

Son. Nothing must stand in the way. We have an immense task before us. The fate of mankind is at stake. We shall unite in the heat of work—and in our untiring zeal we shall be bound together as father and son.

Billionaire [*Shaking his head*]. No—I could never so belie myself.

Son. When your life depends on it?

Billionaire. Because the life you offer me depends on it.

Son. It will take some overcoming. It cost me a struggle to come to you like this. But I did so for the sake of higher things. My father's shadow stands behind you now. Serve this work and you will drive it away.

Billionaire. Not that way.

Son. I swear to you . . .

Billionaire. What?

Son. That I will be a son to you—a son who never lost his father.

Billionaire [*Comes close to him*]. Shall I name my condition?

Son. Anything.

Billionaire. Will you be the son to me that your father wished you to be?

Son. What does that mean?

Billionaire. Go back again to the bank where the sun is shining—then I shall lend myself to your wish. [*The SON stares at him.*] Otherwise the shadow that stands behind me will never be driven away.

Son. How are you talking to me?

Billionaire. Like your father. Is this first test too hard? [*The SON looks at him now timidly. The BILLIONAIRE puts his hand on his shoulder.*] It is good of you to have come once more. One loves to look at people who are young. Have you not a sister? Was she also ready to accept me as her father? You are decoys, but there are no more bridges. I am only more convinced than ever now. Leave me in my garden here. Green, is it not? And go on to your battlefield. It may be that peace does lead to war, but the man that comes out of that bath of blood tries to save himself. You would not help me, so I took my fate into my own hands. Should you rebuke me now, then, for refusing to lend you my support? [*He leads him towards the left.*] In no hour of your active life are you to abuse me. You have made bold plans . . . and if one or other of them should fail . . . or if, in the long run, they all should fail . . . don't belabour your father's memory with rage and reproaches for his not protecting you against disappointment . . . for reasons which it would obviously take too long to go into here. [*The PRIEST comes.*] There, you see—the one indispensable element is lacking—time! [*The SON goes. The BILLIONAIRE stands looking after him. The PRIEST has gone to the bench and looks at the BILLIONAIRE, who turns towards him.*] The third and last guest?

Priest. After what I have just seen, my task is very hard. You have received the greatest consolation your fellow-men could give you—reconciliation with the son of that unfortunate father.

Billionaire. You are mistaken. We parted at odds with each other. And if I accompanied him to the door, that was because I was the stronger of the two. I was supporting the defeated.

Priest. Did he not come to see you?

Billionaire. He set a trap for me to fall into. But I was on my guard.

Priest. Did he forgive you?

Billionaire. Had he reason to?

Priest. You took his father from him.

Billionaire [*Sitting down*]. Do you believe in the right of reprisal?

Priest. Earthly things must be allowed to run their course.

Billionaire. I exercised the right of reprisal, nothing more.

Priest. What injury had he done you?

Billionaire. The choice falls blindly . . . this one or another. They killed my mother and father both.

Priest [*Shrugs his shoulders*]. Your parents met a peaceful end.

Billionaire. Then what reason could I have had to kill?

Priest. In an incomprehensible turmoil of spirit you stretched out your hand for another man's riches.

Billionaire [*Nods*]. In an incomprehensible turmoil—that stamps your wisdom. You roll heaven from over me to breathe in joy beneath. You overwhelm me with your gifts.

Priest [*After a pause*]. You wished to have the coral; I have brought it for you. [*The BILLIONAIRE takes it and looks at it*]. You can dismiss me, if you wish . . . or close your ear to my words.

Billionaire. Speak.

Priest [*Sits down beside him*]. From the refuge which is opened to us when we leave this life which is like a house with dark windows . . .

Billionaire. Tell me about the house with dark windows.

Priest. From that refuge light could enter at a wider door than . . .

Billionaire. Yes, that is it.

Priest. And there is no such thing as too late. In one second the infinite treasure may be won.

Billionaire. What treasure?

Priest. The new Being that waits behind this span of life.

Billionaire. Does it lie in the future?

Priest. That future is his who knocks with a humble hand.

Billionaire [*Shaking his head*]. The old error remains.

Priest. Safe promises are given us.

Billionaire. Flight into the kingdom of heaven. The cross and vinegar are no salvation. In the end it is not to be found—in the beginning it is there, your paradise.

Priest. We are dispossessed . . .

Billionaire. Does that darken recognition?

. . . I don't want to upset you or knock your tools out of your hand. But the deepest truth will never be proclaimed by you or the thousand of you. It is found always only by one man alone. And it is so enormous that it becomes incapable of all effectiveness. . . . You seek a refuge—I could tell you that you are on the wrong path. The goal jumps ahead of you a hundred times over and each time with a blow in your back. And your flight towards sanctuary goes ever more wildly forward. But you never arrive. Not that way . . . not that way.

Priest. Then tell me this: what is it that gives you—I can find no other word for it—your solemn tranquility?

Billionaire. I have reached the paradise again that lies behind all of us. A deed of violence brought me through its gates—one needs that, for the angels on either side bear swords of flame. And now I stand amidst the loveliest meadow green. And the blue of heaven streams over my head.

Priest. Are you thinking of your pleasant childhood?

Billionaire. Simple, is it not? "Become like little children . . ." Wisdom is only the matter of a phrase, too.

Priest. Why can we not remain children always?

Billionaire. That is a riddle you will not solve today or tomorrow either! [*The PRIEST stares out before him*] . . . Do you see this?

Priest. It is the coral you asked for as your last request.

Billionaire. Do you know how it grows out of the bed of the sea? To the surface of the water—no higher. There it stands washed by the tides—moulded by the sea and bound forever to it. Fish are little events that go by in tiny tumult. Fascinating . . .

Priest. What do you mean?

Billionaire. Only to open one corner of the case the riddle is enclosed in. What would be best? Never to come out into the storm that drives towards the shore and drags us in its wake. There turmoil roars and drags us into the frenzy of life. We are all driven on . . . as we are all driven out of our paradise of quiet. . . . Bits broken off the dim coral-tree . . . wounded from the first day with a wound that does not heal, but burns and burns. It is the fearful pain goads us on our way. . . . What is that in your hand? [*He takes the*

PRIEST'S *hand with the black crucifix and lifts it high.*] That only dulls the pain. [*He holds the red coral to his breast with both hands.*] This delivers from sorrow! [*The high narrow door is opened. The BILLIONAIRE stands up.*]

Priest. I cannot go with you.
[*The BILLIONAIRE goes towards the door, walking steadily.*]

THE END

GAS—PART I

A PLAY IN FIVE ACTS

BY GEORG KAISER

Translated from the German by HERMANN SCHEFFAUER

CHARACTERS

THE GENTLEMAN IN WHITE
THE BILLIONAIRE'S SON
THE DAUGHTER
THE OFFICER
THE ENGINEER
FIRST GENTLEMAN IN BLACK
SECOND GENTLEMAN IN BLACK
THIRD GENTLEMAN IN BLACK
FOURTH GENTLEMAN IN BLACK
FIFTH GENTLEMAN IN BLACK
GOVERNMENT COMMISSIONER
THE CLERK
FIRST WORKMAN
SECOND WORKMAN
THIRD WORKMAN
THE GIRL
THE WOMAN
THE MOTHER
THE CAPTAIN
A Machine-Gun Detachment, Workmen, Work-
women

*The action takes place in the same country as that of "The Coral,"
but a generation later*

GAS—PART I

ACT ONE

A vast square room, all in white, the office of the BILLIONAIRE'S SON. The rear wall is composed entirely of glass in large squares. The walls to right and left are covered from floor to ceiling with great charts bearing statistics, scales, and diagrams in black and white. To the left is a spacious desk and an arm-chair of austere design, a second arm-chair at the side. A smaller desk to the right. Visible through the glass wall in a murky violet light, the steep close-throated shapes of great chimney-stacks from which flame and smoke pour in horizontal lines.

Faint bursts of music come and go.

A young CLERK at the smaller desk to the right.

Enter noiselessly the GENTLEMAN IN WHITE, a strange, whimsical, phantom figure, entirely in white, including a chalk-white face. He shuts the door noiselessly, surveys the room, tip-toes towards the CLERK, touches him upon the shoulder.

Gentleman in White. Music?

The Clerk [turns up a startled face to him].

Gentleman in White [listens to sounds from overhead, and nods]. Valse.

Clerk. How do you happen—?

Gentleman in White. Quite casually. A certain noiselessness—achieved by rubber soles. [He seats himself in chair before desk and crosses his legs.] The Chief?—busy? Upstairs?

Clerk. What do you wish?

Gentleman in White. A dancing party?

Clerk [in growing haste and confusion]. There's a wedding—overhead.

Gentleman in White [with pointing finger]. The Chief—or—?

Clerk. The Daughter—and the Officer.

Gentleman in White. Then, of course, he can't be seen at present—the Chief?

Clerk. We have no chief—here—

Gentleman in White [switching round]. Interesting! Assuming that you are not too deeply engaged in delicate calculations—the wage-schedules there—?

Clerk. We have no wage-schedules—here! Gentleman in White. That piles up the interest. That touches the core of things. [Pointing through the window.] This gigantic establishment going full blast—and no chief—no wage-schedules—?

Clerk. We work—and we share!

Gentleman in White [pointing to the wall]. The diagrams? [Rising and reading the tables.] Three divisions. Up to thirty years, Scale One. Up to forty years, Scale Two. Over forty, Scale Three. A simple bit of arithmetic. Profit-sharing according to age. [To CLERK]. An invention of your Chief?—who refuses to be a chief?

Clerk. Because he does not wish to be richer than others!

Gentleman in White. Was he ever rich?

Clerk. He is the son of the Billionaire!

Gentleman in White [smiling]. So he advanced to the very periphery of wealth and then returned to its centre—to its core—And you work?

Clerk. Every man works to his utmost!

Gentleman in White. Because you get your share of the total earnings?

Clerk. Yes—and that's why we work harder here than anywhere else on earth!

Gentleman in White. I suppose you produce something worth such an effort?

Clerk. Gas!

The Gentleman in White [blows through his hollowed hand].

Clerk [excited]. Haven't you heard of the Gas we produce?

The Gentleman in White [also shows excitement].

Clerk. Coal-and-water-power are out of date. This new source of energy drives millions of machines at super-speed. We furnish the power. Our Gas feeds the industry of the entire world!

Gentleman in White [at window]. Day and night—fire and smoke?

Clerk. We have attained the acme of our achievement!

Gentleman in White [returning]. Because poverty is abolished?

Clerk. Our intensive efforts create—create!

Gentleman in White. Because profits are shared?

Clerk. Gas!

Gentleman in White. And suppose sometime the Gas—should—

Clerk. The work must go on—not a moment's pause! We are working for ourselves—not for the pockets of others. No loafing—no strikes. The work goes on without a pause. There will always be Gas!

Gentleman in White. And suppose sometime the Gas should—explode?

The Clerk [stares at him].

Gentleman in White. What then?

The Clerk [is speechless].

The Gentleman in White [breathes the words directly into his face]. The White Horror! [Rising to full height and listening to sounds overhead]. Music. [Halting halfway to door.] Value. [Trips out, silently.]

Clerk [in growing consternation, finally seizes telephone, almost screaming]. The Engineer! [His eyes dart back and forth between the doors to right and left.]

[THE ENGINEER enters from right, wearing a frock-coat.]

Engineer. What—

[A WORKMAN in white blouse comes in from the left, greatly excited.]

Clerk [pointing with outstretched arm at WORKMAN]. There—!

Engineer [to WORKMAN]. Are you looking for me?

Workman [surprised]. I was just coming to report to you.

Engineer [to CLERK]. But you had already telephoned me!

Clerk. Because—

Engineer. Did you receive a report?

Clerk [shakes his head and points to WORKMAN]. This man—

Engineer. Has just come.

Clerk.—was bound to come!

Engineer [somehow disquieted]. What has happened?

Workman. The Gas in the sight-tube shows colour.

Engineer. Colour!

Workman. It is still only a tinge.

Engineer. Growing deeper?

Workman. Visibly.

Engineer. What colour?

Workman. A light rose.

Engineer. Are you not mistaken?

Workman. I have been watching it carefully.

Engineer. How long?

Clerk [impulsively]. Ten minutes?

Workman. Yes.

Engineer. How do you know that?

Clerk. Wouldn't it be best to ring up—upstairs?

Engineer [telephones]. Engineer. Report from Central Station—sight-tube shows colour. I'll inspect personally. [To WORKMAN.] Come along. [Both go out.]

Clerk [suddenly throws up his arms, then runs out screaming]. We're done for—we're done for [From the right the BILLIONAIRE'S SON—sixty years old—and the OFFICER in red uniform come in.]

Officer. Is there any cause for serious alarm?

Billionaire's Son. I am waiting for the Engineer's report. Nevertheless, I am glad you are both going. I wanted to say a word about the fortune which my daughter is bringing you. [Takes a note-book out of his writing-table.]

Officer. I thank you.

Billionaire's Son. You need not thank me. It is her mother's money. It ought to be considerable. I have no mind for such things.

Officer. An officer is forced—

Billionaire's Son. You love each other—I offered no objection.

Officer. I shall guard your daughter, whom you are confiding to my hands, as I would my own honour.

Billionaire's Son [opening book]. Here is the amount of the funds and where they are deposited. Select an efficient banker and take his advice. That is most necessary.

Officer [reads, then in amazement]. We shall certainly require a banker to manage all this!

Billionaire's Son. Because the capital is a large one? I did not mean it that way.

Officer. I do not understand.

Billionaire's Son. What you have now you have for the entire future. You must not expect anything from me. Not now and not later. I shall leave nothing. My principles are sufficiently well known—they must also be familiar to you.

Officer. It is not likely that we—

Billionaire's Son. No one can tell. As long as money is piled up, money will go, lost. Conditions based on money are always uncertain. I feel I must tell you this, so that later on I may feel no responsibility. You

have married the daughter of a workman—I am nothing more. I will not conceal from you the fact that I would rather that my daughter's mother had not left her a fortune. But I exercise authority only in my own province, and I never attempt to force anyone into this. Not even my daughter.

[THE DAUGHTER, in travelling dress, comes in from the right.]

Daughter. Why must we hurry off this way?

Officer [kissing her hand]. How warm you still are from the dance!

Billionaire's Son. I should not like the marriage-festival to end in a discord. [They start.] The danger can be, no doubt, averted. But it demands every possible effort.

Daughter [at window]. Below—in the works?

Billionaire's Son. I should not find time to say good-bye—later on.

Daughter. Is it so very serious?

Officer. Counter measures have been taken.

Billionaire's Son [taking DAUGHTER'S hand].

Bon voyage. Be happy. To-day you have laid aside my name. That is no loss. I am a man of plain tastes. I cannot approach the splendour of your new name. Must you and all you are be extinguished in me—now that you are going?

[THE DAUGHTER looks at him questioningly.]

Officer. How can you say that?

Billionaire's Son. I cannot follow you in your world—a world of fallacies.

Daughter. But I shall return.

Billionaire's Son. It is not likely that I can wait for a real return. [Abruptly.] I shall now ask the guests to leave. [He kisses her forehead. THE DAUGHTER stands deeply moved. He clasps the OFFICER'S hand. THE OFFICER leads the DAUGHTER out.]

Billionaire's Son [telephones]. Tell the people in the drawing-room that a disturbance at the works necessitates bringing the festivities to a close. It is advisable to leave the vicinity as quickly as possible. [The music ceases.]

[Enter ENGINEER from left. A working-coat over his dress suit. He is deeply agitated.]

Engineer [gasping]. Report from Central Station—Gas colours deeper every second. In a few minutes—at the same rate of progress—it will be—a deep red!

Billionaire's Son. Is anything wrong with the engines?

Engineer. All working perfectly!

Billionaire's Son. Any trouble with the ingredients?

Engineer. All ingredients, all!—tested before mixing!

Billionaire's Son. Where does the fault lie?

Engineer [shaking from top to toe]. In—the formula!

Billionaire's Son. Your formula—does not—work out?

Engineer. My formula—does not—work out!

Billionaire's Son. Are you sure?

Engineer. Yes! Now!

Billionaire's Son. Have you found the mistake?

Engineer. No!

Billionaire's Son. Can't you find it?

Engineer. The calculation is—correct!

Billionaire's Son. And yet the sight-tubes show colour?

The Engineer [throws himself into chair before desk and jerks his hand across sheet of paper.]

Billionaire's Son. Have the alarms been set going?

Engineer [without pausing in his work]. All the bells are pounding away.

Billionaire's Son. Is there enough time to clear the works?

Engineer. The lorries are whizzing from door to door.

Billionaire's Son. In good order?

Engineer. In perfect order!

Billionaire's Son [in terrible agitation]. Will all get out?

Engineer [leaping to his feet, standing erect before him]. I have done my duty—the formula is clear—without a flaw!

Billionaire's Son [stunned]. You cannot find the error?

Engineer. Nobody can find it. Nobody! No brain could reckon more carefully. I've made the final calculation!

Billionaire's Son. And it does not work out?

Engineer. It works out—and does not work out. We have reached the limit—works out and does not work out. Figures fail us—works out—yet does not work out. The thing sums itself up, and then turns against us—works out and does not work out!

Billionaire's Son. The Gas—?

Engineer. It is bleeding in the sight-tube! Flooding past the formula—going red in the sight-glass. Floating out of the formula—

taking the bit in its own teeth. I have done my duty. My head is quite clear. The impossible is going to take place—it cannot come—yet it is coming!

Billionaire's Son [feeling for a chair]. We are helpless—delivered up to—

Engineer. The Explosion!

[A terrible sibilance tears asunder the silence without. A grinding thunder bursts—the smoke-stacks crack and fall. A silence, empty and smokeless, ensues. The great glass windows rattle into the room in a cascade of fragments.]

Billionaire's Son [flattened against the wall—in a toneless voice]. The earth swayed—

Engineer. Pressure of millions of atmospheres—

Billionaire's Son. All is silent—a grave.

Engineer. Immense radius of devastation—

Billionaire's Son. Who is still living?

[The door to left is flung open. A WORKMAN—naked—stained by the explosion totters in.]

Workman. Report from Shed Eight—Central—white cat burst—red eyes torn open—yellow mouth gaping—humps up crackling back—grows round—snaps away girders—lifts up roof—bursts—sparks! sparks! [Sitting down in the middle of floor and striking about him]. Chase away the cat—Shoo! Shoo!—smash her jaws—Shoo! Shoo!—bury her eyes—they flame—hammer down her back—hammer it down—thousands of fists! It's swelling, swelling—growing fat—fatter—Gas out of every crack—every tube! [Once more half erecting himself]. Report from Central—the white cat has—exploded! [He collapses and lies prone.]

Billionaire's Son [goes to him].

The Workman [grotes with his hand].

Billionaire's Son [takes his hand].

Workman [with a cry]. Mother! [Dies.]

Billionaire's Son [bending low above him].

O man! O mankind!

ACT TWO

The same room. A green jalousie or blind has been let down over the great window. In front of this stands a long draughting-table covered with drawings.

The young CLERK—with hair which has now grown snow-white—at his table, inactive.

The BILLIONAIRE'S SON is leaning against the draughting-table.

Billionaire's Son. How long since it happened?

Clerk. Just seventeen days ago to-day.

Billionaire's Son [turning and looking at the window]. Formerly great sheds stood there and thrust smoke-stacks against the heavens—belching a fiery breath. That was what we used to see behind this green shutter—not so?

Clerk. Everything pulverized to dust—in a few minutes.

Billionaire's Son. Are you sure it did not take place a thousand years ago?

Clerk. I shall never forget that day!

Billionaire's Son. Perhaps this day is already too far distant for you?

The Clerk [looks at him questioningly].

Billionaire's Son. That is to say—when you look at your hair?

Clerk. I was beside myself—it was almost hallucination. I felt it in my bones that it was coming. I saw Horror—saw it bodily. And that was worse—than what really happened! And I grew white before it really happened.

Billionaire's Son [nodding]. The White Horror—this was necessary in order to give us impetus—a powerful impetus—to fling us forward for a thousand years! Seventeen days, you say? Seventeen days full of peace and quiet.

Clerk [in a matter-of-fact manner]. The workmen still persist in their refusal.

Billionaire's Son. And I cannot employ them. The works have been levelled to the ground.

Clerk. They will not take up work before—

Billionaire's Son. Before I give my permission.

Clerk [nonplussed]. Are you postponing the rebuilding?

Billionaire's Son [shaking his head]. I am not postponing it—

Clerk. You are always at work upon the drawings.

Billionaire's Son [bending over the draughting-table]. I am measuring—and colouring—

Clerk. The whole world is in urgent need of Gas—the demand is imperative. The supplies will soon be exhausted. If the Gas should—come to an end—!

Billionaire's Son [quickly erecting himself]. Then I hold the fate of the world in my hands.

Clerk. You must grant the demands of the workmen—or else the most terrible catastrophe of all will come.

Billionaire's Son [walks towards him and strokes his hair]. A catastrophe you call it?—you youthful whitehead? You should have had your warning. It was terrible enough when everything went up in thunder about us here. Do you wish to return to the White Horror? Are your fingers itching to play at the same old game? Can't you be anything but a Clerk?

Clerk. I have my calling.

Billionaire's Son. Don't you feel the call—for something more important?

Clerk. I must earn my living.

Billionaire's Son. And what if this particular "must" should be done away with?

Clerk. I am a Clerk.

Billionaire's Son. From the crown of your head to the sole of your feet?

Clerk. I—am a Clerk.

Billionaire's Son. Because you have always been a Clerk?

Clerk. It is—my calling.

Billionaire's Son [smiling]. Ah, it has buried you deep indeed. The strata of society are carried upon you—layer by layer. Nothing less than an exploding volcano will bring you to the surface—nothing less than this can teach you to rise.

[Three WORKMEN enter from the left.]

Billionaire's Son [addressing them]. Have you once more come stamping through the debris? I have not yet been able to send you my reply. The thing is still taking shape—I am up to the ears in sketches and calculations—look here! But I can make you a definite proposal if you will grant me a final time limit. Are you willing?

First Workman. The excitement—

Billionaire's Son. I understand. There were many victims—I do not dare to think of how many victims the accident claimed. [Clasping his head with his hands.] And yet I must keep them clearly before me. My decision will then be clear. Speak.

First Workman. We are merely making the same demand which we have always made.

Billionaire's Son. I know what it is. I am revolving it in my mind. I am taking it as the basis of my— [Abruptly.] I am supposed to send away the Engineer?

First Workman. There is still time—today.

Billionaire's Son. And to-morrow?

First Workman. To-morrow we would refuse to take up work for a period of twenty weeks.

Billionaire's Son. Leaving the wreckage lie?

First Workman. In case of a settlement the works could be set going again—in twenty weeks.

Second Workman. The world's supply of Gas will not last longer than twenty weeks.

Third Workman. There will be a world-wide holiday.

Billionaire's Son . . . Why should I let the Engineer go? [The WORKMEN are silent.] Where lies his fault? Did the safety appliances fail to work? Even in a slight degree? Were the alarm signals incomplete? In making concessions to you, I must also be just to him. That is no more than right.

Third Workman. The Gas exploded.

Billionaire's Son. Was it his fault? No. The formula was correct. It is still correct.

First Workman. The Explosion came.

Billionaire's Son. According to its own laws. Not his.

Second Workman. He made the formula.

Billionaire's Son. No man could make a safer one!

[The three WORKMEN are silent.]

First Workman. The Engineer must go!

Second Workman. He must go to-day!

Third Workman. His going must be announced at once!

First Workman. We must take this announcement back with us.

Billionaire's Son. Must you have your sacrifice? Is that everything? Do you think that you can thereby silence the dead who call aloud in you? Do you think that you can strangle that which clamours in your blood? Can you hide a field of corpses under new corpses? Are you entangled in this horrible lust of revenge after all the horrors which have been? Is this the fruit of the fiery tree which rained pitch and brimstone upon us?

First Workman. There is also this—we can no longer be responsible for the attitude of the workers.

Second Workman. There is a fermentation—which is growing.

Third Workman. There will be an outbreak.

Billionaire's Son [violently]. Tell them—all, all of them—that they have ears to hear and a brain to reason with. The thing passed beyond the limits of the human. The brain of the Engineer had calculated everything to

the utmost. But beyond this there rule forces which suffer no rule. The flaw lies in eternity. Impossible to find by mortal means. The formula tallies—yet the Gas explodes. Can you not understand?

First Workman. We have our orders.

Billionaire's Son. Will you also assume the responsibility?

First Workman. For what?

Billionaire's Son. If I grant your demand—if I let the Engineer go—and you return to work—

First Workman. We'll pledge ourselves to that.

Billionaire's Son. And you will make Gas?

Second and Third Workman. Gas!

Billionaire's Son. The formula will be used?

First Workman [*hesitating*]. If it is correct —

Billionaire's Son. Incontrovertibly so!

Second Workman. It is correct and —

Billionaire's Son. And the Gas exploded.

[*The three WORKMEN are silent.*]

Billionaire's Son. And, therefore, must not the Engineer remain?

[*The three WORKMEN stare in front of them.*]

Billionaire's Son. Is not my refusal a safeguard against horror? Am I not keeping a door shut, a door behind which hell is smouldering? A door which leaves no way open to life? It is like a burning cul-de-sac. Who would go into a cul-de-sac? and lose sight of his goal? Who would be such a fool as to batter his forehead against the last wall and say: I have reached the end. He has reached the end, it is true, but this end is Annihilation. Turn back! turn back! you have heard the warning thundered from the heavens—it rent the air and came crashing down upon us. Turn back! turn back!

First Workman [*erecting himself*]. We must work!

Second Workman. And our work is here!

Third Workman. We are workers!

Billionaire's Son. You are workers—indefatigably so. Caught up in the maelstrom of the ultimate effort. Immeasurably enthusiastic over all this. [*Pointing to the charts and tables.*] There we have the mad chase—all the diagrams. Your work—and your wages in the hollow of your hands. That cheers you up—that spurs you on beyond even profit—that makes you work for work's sake. It is like an outbreak of fever, and it

clouds the senses. Work—work—a wedge that is driven forward and which bores because it bores. To what end? I bore because I bore—I was a borer—I am a borer—and I remain a borer! Doesn't this make you shiver? Shiver at thought of the mutilation you inflict upon yourselves? You living, sentient, wonderful beings—you manifold ones—you men!

First Workman. We must take back a clear reply.

Billionaire's Son. I have given you one. But you do not yet understand. And it is also new to me—to me who feel my way so slowly and carefully.

Second Workman. Is the Engineer going?

Billionaire's Son. He is going.

Third Workman. To-day?

Billionaire's Son. He is not going!

First Workman. We do not understand.

Billionaire's Son. He goes—and he remains—the Engineer must become a matter of utter indifference to us.

Second Workman. What does this mean?

Billionaire's Son. That is still a small and precious secret of mine. I shall reveal it to you—later on. Look at those plans—I did not finish them—because the help I need is not yet at hand—and this help I can obtain only from the man who is and is not your enemy.

First Workman. May we give a definite answer to our fellows out there?

Billionaire's Son. Whatever you please. I will carry out everything—and more than you can promise your fellows out there. So now you may depart—in contentment.

[*The three WORKMEN go out. BILLIONAIRE'S SON bends over the drawings on the draughting-table.*]

Clerk [*leaping up from his chair, hurriedly*]. I—am going!

Billionaire's Son [*rises to an erect position*].

Clerk. I am—out of work.

Billionaire's Son. For the present.

Clerk. But there will be no change!

Billionaire's Son. Visions again? But of a somewhat darker shade this time? No mirage with a green oasis rising from the desert? Prophecy, my young prophetic friend. You have a most peculiar gift. I am curious to hear your prophecies.

Clerk. I—there is nothing more to write about.

Billionaire's Son. Can nothing tempt you?

Are you not eager for health? Would you not like to work with both hands, instead of this right hand of yours which does nothing but write? you with the lamed left?

Clerk. I—am going!

Billionaire's Son. Whither?

Clerk. To the others!

Billionaire's Son. Gather together and growl before the gates. The wheels are still spinning in your breasts—the urge is still too great. It will require time before inertia can set in. And then I'll admit you all.

[CLERK goes out to the right. BILLIONAIRE'S SON once more at the draughting-table. Enter ENGINEER from the left.]

Billionaire's Son [looks up and regards him quizzically]. No damage? in body or clothes?

[ENGINEER looks at him questioningly.]

Billionaire's Son. Are you not the scapegoat who is to be impaled on his own horns? Haven't they beaten you yet?

Engineer. I heard them hissing.

Billionaire's Son. That was only the signal for the bleeding sacrifice—the slaughter takes place to-morrow.

Engineer. I know that I am free of carelessness—or incapacity.

Billionaire's Son. But they are after your scalp.

Engineer. These people ought to be shown —

Billionaire's Son. . . . That a proof is clear and yet is not clear.

Engineer. I cannot leave—it would be like a confession of guilt —

Billionaire's Son. Could I not discharge you?

Engineer. No! For you would then brand me with the mark—which makes me an outcast.

Billionaire's Son. One must suffer for many.

Engineer [excitedly]. Yes—if one would serve the advantage of the many. But where is the advantage here? Take this man or that man and put him in my place—the formula remains valid—must remain so. He must reckon with human reason, and human reason reckons only in this way. Or you must make Gas by means of a weaker formula.

Billionaire's Son. Do you believe in a weaker formula?

Engineer. All the machinery of the world would have to be rebuilt.

Billionaire's Son. That would not prevent its coming to pass.

Engineer. Facing the necessity of an inferior motive power —

Billionaire's Son. The machines might be stopped—but not men.

Engineer. But after they have learned the danger?

Billionaire's Son. And no matter if they were blown up ten times, they would establish themselves in the burning zone for the eleventh time.

Engineer. An explosion such as this —

Billionaire's Son. Will bring them to their senses, you think? Has it had any influence upon the fever which makes them rave? They are already clamouring out there: hand the Engineer over to us—and then we'll speed on again—out of one explosion into another explosion.

Engineer. And, therefore, my leaving is senseless.

Billionaire's Son [smiling craftily]. It would be an unparalleled stupidity! They would merely come jumping into the witches' cauldron once more—the rogues. The gates must be blocked, and I intend to use you for that purpose. I am powerful, now that I am going to keep you by me.

Engineer [stroking his forehead]. But, what are you going —

Billionaire's Son. Come here. [He takes him to the draughting-table.] Do you see this? Sketches—rough sketches. The first draft of a new project. Merely hints of something big, something momentous—the first sketches.

Engineer. What is that?

Billionaire's Son. Don't you recognize the land?

Engineer. The plant?

Billionaire's Son. Has been levelled to the ground.

Engineer. Are these the new sheds?

Billionaire's Son. What! of such ridiculous dimensions!

Engineer. Are these yards?

Billionaire's Son. The coloured circles?

Engineer. Are these railway tracks?

Billionaire's Son. These green lines? [THE ENGINEER stares at the plans.] Can't you guess? Have you no suspicions? You sly duck! You feeder on figures! Are you puzzled by this many-coloured riddle? You are blind—colour-blind from the eternal monotony of your doings—up to this very day. Now

a new day is born to greet you, and smiles upon you like springtime. Open your eyes and let them sweep over this domain. The vari-coloured earth is all about you [*pointing to the plans.*] The green lines—streets bordered by trees. The red, the yellow, the blue circles—open spaces full of flowering plants, sprouting from smooth lawns. The squares—houses, human dwellings with a small holding of land—shelters. Mighty streets go forth here—penetrating, conquering other domains, great roads trodden by pilgrims, our pilgrims, who shall preach simplicity—to us—to all! [*His gestures are grandiose.*]

Engineer [puzzled]. Do you intend to rebuild the plant—somewhere? —

Billionaire's Son. It buried itself. It reached its apex and then collapsed. And that is why we are discharged—you and I and all the others—discharged with clear consciences. We went our way to the very end without fear—and now we turn aside. It is no more than our right—our honest right.

Engineer. The reconstruction—is doubtful?

Billionaire's Son [patting the plans with his hand]. The decision is here and it is against reconstruction.

Engineer. And the Gas—which can be made only here?

Billionaire's Son. The Gas exploded.

Engineer. The workmen?

Billionaire's Son. Homesteaders—each on his patch of green.

Engineer. That—is—impossible!

Billionaire's Son. Do you object to my plans? I told you that they were incomplete. I have counted upon you to help me carry them out. I am counting greatly upon your help. There is no other man so capable of carrying out a big project as yourself. I have the deepest confidence in you. Shall we proceed to work? [*He draws up a stool to the draughting-table and sits down.*]

Engineer [making a few steps backward]. But I am an Engineer!

Billionaire's Son. You will find excellent use for your capacities here.

Engineer. That is not—my branch.

Billionaire's Son. All branches are united in this.

Engineer. I cannot undertake such a task.

Billionaire's Son. Is it too difficult for you?

Engineer. Too—pitiful!

Billionaire's Son [rising]. That do you say? You think this trivial—you with your genius

for figures! Are you the slave of your calculations? Are you fettered to those girders which you constructed? Have you delivered up your arms and legs, your blood and your senses to this frame which you devised? Are you a diagram covered with a skin? [*He reaches out for him.*] Where are you? Your human warmth? your beating pulse? your sense of shame?

Engineer. If I cannot be occupied—in my own line —

Billionaire's Son. Your hands should muzzle your mouth—for it is talking murder.

Engineer. . . . Then I must ask for my dismissal.

Billionaire's Son [supporting himself against the table]. No! that will bring back the others. The road would be clear and they would come storming back, and build up their hell again—and the fever will continue to rage. Help me! stay by me! Work here with me—here where I am working.

Engineer. I am dismissed!

[BILLIONAIRE'S SON regards him speechlessly. ENGINEER goes out to the right.]

Billionaire's Son [strong at last]. Then I must force, must force you—every one of you!

ACT THREE

An oval room. There is a high wainscot of white-enamelled wood. In this there are two invisible doors, two at the rear—one to the left. In the centre there is a small round table covered with a green cloth. This is surrounded by six chairs, close together.

The OFFICER enters from the left—in a military cape. He can scarcely control his emotion. He looks for the doors, taps parts of the wainscot.

The BILLIONAIRE'S SON enters from the left, to the rear.

Officer [turning swiftly about and advancing]. Am I disturbing you?

Billionaire's Son [astonished]. Have you two come back?

Officer. No, I've come back alone.

Billionaire's Son. Where is your wife?

Officer. She—was not able to accompany me.

Billionaire's Son. Is she ill—my daughter?

Officer. She—does not know I've come here!

Billionaire's Son [nodding]. The looks of

things here are certainly far from edifying. The paternal foundation is now only a mass of ruins. Would you like to have a look around?

Officer [*hastily*]. The catastrophe must have been terrible. I suppose the rebuilding is going ahead at a good pace?

Billionaire's Son. Have you noticed anything of the sort going on?

Officer. It is natural—and you must be immensely busy.

Billionaire's Son [*shaking his head*]. My time —

Officer. You are more than busy. The work is more than you can manage. [*Pointing to the table*]. There is going to be a meeting. I am sorry to be forced to disturb you. [*Suddenly, almost abruptly*]. But I must ask you to give me a little of your time—now!

Billionaire's Son. All things are equally important to me.

Officer. I thank you for your willingness to hear me. The matter concerns me—concerns my salvation, my rescue —

Billionaire's Son. Salvation? rescue? from what?

Officer. From being cashiered from the regiment—in disgrace.

Billionaire's Son. Why?

Officer. I've contracted debts—at cards—debts of honour. And I must pay them by to-morrow noon.

Billionaire's Son. Can't you pay them?

Officer. No!

Billionaire's Son. If it is necessary—draw upon your fortune—your wife's dowry.

Officer. That—no longer exists.

Billionaire's Son. What has become of it?

Officer [*excitedly*]. I played and I lost. I tried to cover the losses and began to speculate. The speculations were a failure and involved great losses. I increased my stakes at the table beyond my means—and if I cannot pay—I—must—blow—out—my brains!

Billionaire's Son [*after a pause*]. And so your final way leads you to me?

Officer. It cost me a great effort to come here—to you—who have confided in me, and whom I have deceived. But despair drives me to you. I deserve your reproaches—all the blame you can pour upon me is just blame. I have nothing to say in my defence.

Billionaire's Son. I do not reproach you.

Officer [*reaching for his hand*]. I am shamed by your goodness—your forgiveness. I swear that—once I get out of this safely—I —

Billionaire's Son. I do not wish you to swear —

Officer. Then I will pledge myself —

Billionaire's Son. Because I cannot do you a service —

Officer [*stares at him*]. Will you not —

Billionaire's Son. I cannot help—even though I would. I told you at the time that you were marrying the daughter of a workman. I am that workman. I hid nothing from you. I gave you a clear idea of everything.

Officer. Means are everywhere at your disposal!

Billionaire's Son. No.

Officer. A word from you—and every bank is at your service.

Billionaire's Son. No longer to-day.

Officer. The great plant—surely that will be working again in a few weeks —

Billionaire's Son. It will be standing still!

Officer. Still —?

Billionaire's Son. Yes, I have come to other conclusions. Will you help me? I need help—much help. The great stronghold of error cannot be toppled over by one man alone—a thousand hands must help to shake it.

Officer [*bewildered*]. You will not help —?

Billionaire's Son. I am myself in need. A good wind brings you hither. You are a debtor—as I am a debtor. And we are both guiltless. But now lips are loosened and accusations pour forth—accusations against all of us.

Officer [*clutching his head with his hands*]. I—can—not—think —

Billionaire's Son. Take off that gaudy uniform and put aside your sword. You are a good man—for did not my daughter become your wife? You are sound at heart. Whence came this shadow? Whence all that hides and covers up your real self? How did you succumb to this temptation for show?

Officer. What!—you expect me to give up my career as an officer —?

Billionaire's Son. Confess your fault—and prove your guiltlessness. See that you win the eyes and ears of men—see that your voice carries farther and farther. I myself cannot realise myself—I remain disguised for life in this coat. And so the currents of the great forces in me are turned awry—turned into a canal full of deeds undone—because one deed still threatens—a deed which will bring annihilation in its train. I would save those who

would bring about something which can only bring about ruin.

Officer [suppressing a groan]. Can—you help me?

Billionaire's Son. Yes!

Officer. Then give me ——!

Billionaire's Son. That which you give me I could never pay for.

Officer. My period of grace is expiring.

Billionaire's Son. No, it will go on for ever.

Officer. Money!

Billionaire's Son. Ought I to cheat you with money—cheat you out of your real self?

Officer [in desperation]. I must leave the Service—I shall be struck off the Rolls—I—

Billionaire's Son [leading him towards the door with his arm about his shoulder]. Yes, no doubt there will be a sensation, should I abandon you. You, my son-in-law, and I with the most abundant means at my disposal. And yet I did nothing, they will say. That will arouse their attention—they will become most attentive listeners. I need good listeners . . . and you will help me to get them. That will be your service. And praise shall be ours—even without my recognition. But my recognition will not fail.

[*The OFFICER goes out.*]

[*BILLIONAIRE'S SON steps up to the table, passes his hand over the green cloth—nods—and then goes out behind to the left.*]

[*The FIRST GENTLEMAN IN BLACK enters from the left. A massive head with short bristles of gray hair rises above the closely-buttoned black frock-coat.*]

[*The SECOND GENTLEMAN IN BLACK enters—he is bald—and his costume, like that of all following him, resembles that of the FIRST.*]

Second Gentleman in Black. How are things at your place?

First Gentleman in Black. Not a finger moving.

Second Gentleman in Black. The same thing at my place.

[*Enter THIRD GENTLEMAN IN BLACK—with blonde pointed beard.*]

Third Gentleman in Black [to the FIRST]. How are things at your place?

First Gentleman in Black. Not a finger moving.

Third Gentleman in Black [to SECOND]. And with you?

[*SECOND GENTLEMAN IN BLACK shakes his head.*]

Third Gentleman in Black. The same with me.

[*The FOURTH and the FIFTH GENTLEMAN IN BLACK enter—two brothers closely resembling each other, about thirty.*]

Fourth Gentleman in Black [to the FIRST]. How are things at your place?

Fifth Gentleman in Black [to SECOND]. How are things with you?

Third Gentleman in Black [to both]. How are things with you?

Fourth and Fifth Gentlemen in Black. Not a finger moving!

First Gentleman in Black. The same with us.

Second Gentleman in Black. This is the most tremendous stoppage of work I have ever experienced.

Fifth Gentleman in Black. And what is the cause?

Third Gentleman in Black. Our workmen are striking in sympathy with these men here.

Fifth Gentleman in Black. Why are they striking?

Second Gentleman in Black. Because the Engineer has not been discharged.

Fifth Gentleman in Black. Why is he kept on?

Second Gentleman in Black. Yes, why?

Fourth Gentleman in Black. Because of a mere whim!

Third Gentleman in Black. Just so!

First Gentleman in Black. There may be another reason. A reason based on principle. They demand the dismissal of the Engineer—that gives them something to fight about—furnishes a difficulty—a stumbling-block. If the workers make demands upon us—we must oppose these demands—unconditionally. That has been the case here—and, therefore, the Engineer keeps his post!

Third Gentleman in Black. But you forget that he is not one of us.

Fourth Gentleman in Black. It is another whim—of our friends—just like the first.

Second Gentleman in Black. And just as dangerous as the other. You will see!

Second Gentleman in Black. It is to be hoped that it is not more dangerous!

Third Gentleman in Black. I am of the opinion it could not be worse.

Second Gentleman in Black. This one affair causes us enough trouble!

Fourth Gentleman in Black. The whole body of workers has its eyes on these works!

Fifth Gentleman in Black. This sharing of profits with everybody causes unrest in all the other syndicates.

Second Gentleman in Black. An ulcer which ought to be burnt out!

Third Gentleman in Black. With fire and brimstone!

First Gentleman in Black. But you must not overlook the results which have been attained on the basis of this method. The sharing of profits has brought about the highest intensification of production, and this has brought about the most powerful of all products—Gas!

Second Gentleman in Black. Yes—Gas!

Third Gentleman in Black. Gas!

Fifth Gentleman in Black. At any rate we need Gas.

Fourth Gentleman in Black. Under all circumstances.

Third Gentleman in Black. We must present our demand: the dismissal of the Engineer.

Second Gentleman in Black. Quite independently of the workmen!

Fifth Gentleman in Black. Quite independently of the workmen.

Fourth Gentleman in Black. That saves our faces!

Third Gentleman in Black. Have you got the order of business?

Fourth Gentleman in Black [at the table]. Nothing on hand here.

First Gentleman in Black. We have only this point to consider. Are we of one mind?

[The other GENTLEMEN IN BLACK shake his hand in agreement.]

[Enter the SON OF THE BILLIONAIRE from the left to the rear. He points to the chairs, upon which the GENTLEMEN IN BLACK quickly seat themselves. The SON OF THE BILLIONAIRE seats himself last, between the FOURTH and FIFTH GENTLEMEN IN BLACK.]

Fifth Gentleman in Black. Who will take down the minutes?

Billionaire's Son. No, no, let there be no minutes.

Third Gentleman in Black. A meeting and no minutes!

Billionaire's Son. Yes, yes, we'll have an open discussion.

First Gentleman in Black. Considering the importance of the matter I hold it as abso-

lutely necessary that—in all cases our independence of a similar demand by the Workmen be —

Second Gentleman in Black. I move that the minutes of the meeting be published!

Third Gentleman in Black. Let us vote upon that.

First Gentleman in Black. Those who are for —

[The GENTLEMEN IN BLACK each fling up an arm with a vigorous gesture.]

Billionaire's Son [forcing down the arms of the FOURTH and FIFTH GENTLEMEN IN BLACK]. Not all against one—that would make me too powerful. That would be coercing you—and I wish only to persuade you.

First Gentleman in Black. If our negotiations —

Billionaire's Son. Do you wish to negotiate with me? Are you the workmen? Are you not the masters? the employers?

Third Gentleman in Black. You have invited us without drawing up the order of business for the day. We conclude from this that you wish us to draw up this order ourselves. That, surely, is a just conclusion. We have agreed and are unanimous upon one point.

Second Gentleman in Black. I think the discussion will be brief, and that we had better return to our own plants.

Fourth Gentleman in Black. It is high time that we begin work once more.

Fifth Gentleman in Black. The first night-shift will begin work this evening.

Third Gentleman in Black. There are losses which can never be made good.

Billionaire's Son. Losses? You have had losses? What have you lost?

The Gentlemen in Black [together]. No work is going on—the plants are lying still—the workmen are on strike!

Billionaire's Son [lifting up a hand]. I know; they are holding funeral exercises. Surely they have good reason. Were not thousands—burnt?

First Gentleman in Black. The strike is quite a different motive.

Billionaire's Son. No, no! You must not listen to their speeches. These are senseless. What would you say when I tell you that they demand the dismissal of the Engineer? Isn't that a sign of their muddled minds? No, they do not know out there what they are doing.

[THE GENTLEMEN IN BLACK look at him in perplexity.]

Billionaire's Son. Is the Engineer guilty, and must he do penance by resigning? Was his formula bad? It stood the test before—and it stands the test now. Upon what pretext could I send him away?

Second Gentleman in Black [nodding]. The formula has been tested —

Third Gentleman in Black [also nodding]. Its validity has been proved —

Fourth Gentleman in Black [also nodding]. It is the formula —

Fifth Gentleman in Black [also nodding]. For Gas!

Billionaire's Son. Do you really realise this?

First Gentleman in Black. And for that reason it may be applied by any Engineer.

Second Gentleman in Black. This or that one.

Fourth Gentleman in Black. The Engineer is a mere side-issue.

Fifth Gentleman in Black. A new Engineer—and the same old formula!

Third Gentleman in Black. And thereby the strike comes to an end.

First Gentleman in Black. We are assembled here to present our demands—the dismissal of the Engineer!

Billionaire's Son [staring]. —Have you forgotten—are you still deaf—is the thunder and the crashing no longer rolling in your ears—are you no longer shaken upon your seats—are you paralyzed?

Second Gentleman in Black. The catastrophe is a dark page —

Fourth Gentleman in Black. We book it to profit and loss —

Fifth Gentleman in Black. And turn over a new leaf!

Billionaire's Son. The same formula!

First Gentleman in Black. We hope —

Second Gentleman in Black. Naturally!

Billionaire's Son. The same formula —?

Third Gentleman in Black. Perhaps there will be a longer interval between the —

Fourth Gentleman in Black. One must gain experience!

Billionaire's Son. Twice—thrice —?

Fifth Gentleman in Black. We shall know when to expect the next —

Second Gentleman in Black. It is not likely that we shall live to see it.

Billionaire's Son. I am to let them in — surrender —?

First Gentleman in Black. After all, the industry of the entire world cannot be permitted to stand still.

Third Gentleman in Black. It is entirely dependent upon Gas!

Billionaire's Son. Is it that? Am I the source of energy which sets all this in motion? Is my power as vast as that?

[THE GENTLEMEN IN BLACK regard him in amazement.]

Billionaire's Son. My voice is mighty—mightier than horror and joy! Does the choice between being and non-being depend upon my word? Does the yes or the no which my lips may speak determine Life—or Annihilation—? [Lifting his hands.] I say—no!—no!—no!—A human being decides—as a human being only can decide, no!—no!—no!

[THE GENTLEMEN IN BLACK look at one another.]

Fourth Gentleman in Black. That —

Fifth Gentleman in Black. —is —

Third Gentleman in Black. — really —

Second Gentleman in Black. What—is—the —

Billionaire's Son. The wreckage lies there—and above the wreckage there is new soil—layer upon layer—the growth of the earth in a new garment—the eternal law of Becoming.

First Gentleman in Black. What does this mean?

Billionaire's Son. Never again shall smokestacks belch here! Never again shall machines pound and hammer. Never again shall the cry of the doomed be mingled with the—unavoidable—Explosion.

Second Gentleman in Black. The plant —

Third Gentleman in Black. The reconstruction —

First Gentleman in Black. Gas?

Billionaire's Son. No reconstruction!—no plant!—no Gas! I will not take the responsibility upon myself—no man can take it upon himself!

First Gentleman in Black. We are —

Third Gentleman in Black. —to do without —

Fifth Gentleman in Black. —Gas?

Billionaire's Son. Without human sacrifices!

Second Gentleman in Black. We have established everything upon a basis —

The Other Gentleman in Black. — of Gas!

Billionaire's Son. Invent a better Gas—or make shift with an inferior one!

First Gentleman in Black. This is monstrous. We unqualifiedly reject all such imputations. What does it mean?—nothing less than a transformation of our entire plants—

Fourth Gentleman in Black. The costs would be ruinous!

Third Gentleman in Black. It is not a matter of costs—even if these should bankrupt some of us. What I ask is this: shall the production of the world be reduced?

Fifth Gentleman in Black. And that is why you must produce Gas. It is your duty. Now, if we had not had your Gas —

Second Gentleman in Black. You have brought about the highest development of modern mechanics. And now you must continue to supply Gas!

First Gentleman in Black. By means of your advanced and fruitful methods which give your workmen a share in the profits, you have achieved this great finality—Gas. And that is why we tolerated this method—and now we demand Gas!

Billionaire's Son. The method is indeed fruitful—as I have discovered. But I have merely gone these ways a little sooner than yourselves. Sometime or other you must all follow—the wages of all to be shared by all.

Fifth Gentleman in Black. This formula should not have been invented—if there was any likelihood that the making of Gas was to be suspended sometime or other!

Billionaire's Son. The invention was necessary—for the fever for work possessed the world. It raged blindly, and flooded all the frontiers of life.

First Gentleman in Black. A reduction of the speed to which we have been accustomed could not be enforced.

Billionaire's Son. No, I do not counsel a return to a feebler, slower movement. We must go on—leaving only the finished, perfect thing behind us—or we should be unworthy of our task. We must not succumb to cowardice. We are men—human beings imbued with a mighty courage. Have we not once more shown this courage? Did we not bravely exhaust every possibility?—It was only after we saw dead men by the thousands lying about us, that we struck out for new fields. Have we not once more tested the elements of our power and driven it to extremes merely to know how much power we enjoyed—to fetter the whole—to fetter mankind? Surely our pilgrimage goes towards mankind—epoch

upon epoch—one epoch closes to-day so that the other may open—perhaps the last of all.

Second Gentleman in Black. . . . Do you really intend to stop all production?

Billionaire's Son. Man is the measure for me—and the needs that uphold him.

Third Gentleman in Black. We have other needs.

Billionaire's Son. As long as we exhaust man in other ways.

Fourth Gentleman in Black. Do you wish to gull us?

Fifth Gentleman in Black. With pamphlets?

Billionaire's Son. I will set an example—establish it on my own land—there will be small domains for all of us in the midst of green promenades.

First Gentleman in Black. What! you are going to cut up the most valuable tract of land in the world—for such a purpose!

Billionaire's Son. The purpose—is Man!

Third Gentleman in Black. You must have command of great means, for the world takes account only of—money.

Billionaire's Son. Our former profits will suffice for such a period as will be necessary before our new enterprise can take root and grow.

Fourth Gentleman in Black. You would have to wait long before you found any imitators.

Billionaire's Son. And what if there should be no Gas for you?

[*THE GENTLEMEN IN BLACK are silent.*]

Billionaire's Son. I could force you—as you see—but I do not wish to force you. It would offend you—and I have need of your help. Here we are—six of us seated about this table—let us say the six of us get up and go forth, and our voices become a sextuple thunder which all men must hear. The dumbest, deafest ear would hear our message, under this sixfold pressure. You are the great ones of the earth—Labour's Great Gentlemen in Black—arise and come forth and we shall proclaim that the fulness of time has fulfilled itself—and tell it again and again to them who will not understand, because the whirlwind which shook them until yesterday is still in their blood. Arise—go forth!!

First Gentleman in Black [after a pause, during which he looks about the table, exchanging glances]. Are we unanimous? [*THE GENTLEMEN IN BLACK sling up their right hands.*] We will set a time-limit—until this evening. If

we are not informed by then that the Engineer has been dismissed, we shall apply to the Government. We bid you good-day.

[*The GENTLEMEN IN BLACK go out.*]

Billionaire's Son. [*seated at the table, rubbing his hand slowly across the green cloth, murmuring.*] No — no — no — no — no —!

[*Enter the OFFICER in extreme perturbation—from the left.*]

Officer [*unbuckling his sword and about to lay it on the table. But he halts, and feverishly buckles the sword on again.*] I — cannot — do — it — I — cannot! [*He draws a revolver, places it against his breast, stalks slowly out, step by step. As the door closes, a shot is heard.*]

Billionaire's Son [*rising, staring towards the door.*] The world is out of joint—let others force it back again!

ACT FOUR

A great circular hall of concrete, the upper part vague and nebulous. From the cupola of this hall a cone of light from a hidden arc lamp falls through dusk and dust, a mysterious illumination.

In the centre, directly under this lamp, there is a steep, small, pulpit-like platform of iron, with two winding stairs.

Workmen are assembled, there are many women. Stillness reigns. The Speakers in alternation appear suddenly upon the platform, almost as from a trapdoor.

Voices [rapidly swelling]. Who?

Girl [with upraised arms]. I! [Stillness.]

Girl. I'll tell you of my brother!—I no longer knew I had a brother. Someone left the house in the morning and came home at night—and slept. Or he left the house at night and came back in the morning—and slept. One of his hands was large—the other small. The large hand never slept. It kept making the same movement—day and night. This hand ate up his body and sucked up all his strength. This hand grew to be the whole man!—What was left of my brother? My brother who used to play beside me—who made sand-castles with his two hands?—He plunged into work. And this work needed only one hand—one hand that lifted and depressed the lever—minute after minute—up and down, to the very second! He never missed a stroke—the lever was always true—

always exact. And he stood in front of it and served it like a dead man. He never made a mistake—never missed a count. His hand obeyed his head and his head belonged to his hand!—And that was all that was left of my brother!—Was this really all that was left?—Then one day at noon—*It came!* Rivers of fire shot out of every crack and cranny! And the explosion ate up the hand of my brother. And so my brother gave up his all!—Is that too little?—Did my brother dicker about the price when they hired his hand to lift that lever? Did he not suppress all that had made him my brother—and turned him into a mere hand?—And did he not at last pay for his hand too?—Is the pay too little—to ask for the Engineer?—My brother is my voice—do not work before the Engineer is forced to leave!—Do not work—you hear my brother's voice! [*Bending over towards them.*]

Girl [crowding up from below]. And it is my brother's voice!

[*The GIRL descends into the Crowd. Stillness.*]

Voices [swelling forth anew]. Who?

[*A MOTHER stands on the platform.*]

Mother. I! [Stillness.]

Mother. A Mother's son was ground to pieces by the Explosion! What is a Son? What was it the fire killed? My son?—I did not know my son any more—for I had buried him long ago—the first morning that he went to the works.—Are two eyes that had a fixed stare from looking at the sight-tube—are they a son?—Where was my child—that I had born with a mouth to laugh—with limbs to play? My child—that threw its arms about my neck and kissed me from behind? My child?—I am a Mother, and know that what is born in pain is lost in sorrow. I am a Mother—I do not groan over this. I stifle the cry on my lips—I choke it down. I am a Mother—I do not strike—I do not accuse—not I—it is my child that calls—here! I gave it birth—and now it comes back into my womb—dead!—from Mother to Mother! I have my son again! I feel his throbbing in my blood! I feel him tearing at my tongue—I feel him crying, crying: Mother! Where have you been so long? Mother! you were not by me—Mother! you left me alone so soon—Mother! you did not smash the sight-tube—and it was no longer than a finger and as thin as a fly's wing.—Why did he not crush it himself?—one touch had done it.—

Why was his will so weak—and all his strength gone into his staring eyes? Why did the flames put out his eyes? Why? Why? Must he do everything—and demand nothing? What does it all mean compared to his loss? Here, look! a Mother—and there, look! the Engineer!

[WOMEN crowd closely about the foot of the platform.]

Women. It is our son!

Mother. Mothers and Mothers and Mothers you! — sons cry out in you—do not strangle their cries; stay away from the works—stay away from the works—there is the Engineer.

Women. Stay away from the works!

[MOTHER descends from the platform and mingles with the WOMEN.]

[Stillness.]

Voices [loudly]. Who?

Woman [upon the platform]. II

[Stillness.]

Woman. We had our wedding—one day. A piano played—it was in the afternoon. Everybody danced about the rooms. A whole day was ours—morning—noon—and night. My man, my fine big man, was with me one whole day. One day from morning till night. His life lasted a whole day!—Is that too much? Because a day has morning—and noon—and evening? And the night? Is that too long for a man's life?—It is wonderfully long—twenty-four hours—and a wedding! A wedding and twenty-four hours—and a piano—and dancing—don't these make up a life? What does a man expect? To live two whole days? What a time!—an eternity! The sun would grow tired of shining upon him! We only get a wedding once—but the iron car rolls on for ever. Forwards and backwards—backwards—and forwards—and the man goes with it—always with it—because the man is part of the foot. Only his foot is important—his foot operates the block-switch—making the car go and halt—and the foot works, works almost without the man that travels with it. If only the foot were not so closely tied to the man! The man would have a chance to live—but his foot pins him to the car which rolls back and rolls forward—day after day—with the man fastened by the foot. But then the Explosion came! Why was my husband burned alive? Why the whole man? And not only the foot which was the most important part of my man? Why must my man be burnt, body and limbs, because of a foot?—

Because foot and body and limbs were all part of him, because the foot will not work without the man. The foot cannot work alone—it needs my man.—Is this plant like my man—who lived only one day—his wedding day—and died a whole life long?—Are not old worn-out pieces replaced with new?—and the works go on as before?—Is not every man a mere part, interchangeable with other parts—and the works go on?—Do not fight for the man at the lever—do not fight for the man at the sight-tube—do not fight for the man on the iron car—the Engineer blocks the way—the Engineer blocks the way!

Women [about the platform]. Not for our men!

Girls. Not for our brothers!

Mothers. Not for our sons!

[The WOMAN leaves the platform. The WORKMAN appears on the platform.]

Workman. Girls—I am your brother. I have sworn it—and I am your brother. I have sworn—and I am burned as he was burnt. I am lying under the ashes and dust—until you send me back to the lever—in place of your brother—who was blown up.—Here is his hand—broad and stiff, for gripping a jerking lever.—This hand has had its earnings—they lay in the hollow of it—and this hand carried them home. And this hand never counted the wages—there they lay in the drawer—and filled the boxes—and became worthless. What can a hand buy—now that this hand has lost its motive power—your brother? What can a hand wish? desire? A single hand—and all the savings in the box!—That hand has been paid for—but not your brother!—He has been burnt alive—and has, therefore, become alive—and now he is crying for his wages —: give us the Engineer—give us the Engineer!

Workmen [around the platform]. We are your brothers!

[The WORKMAN descends among them.]

Workman [already standing on the platform]. Mother—I am your son!—he has grown alive again—for the sake of his eyes—those eyes that stared so because of the sight-tube—he has grown alive again. Your son lives again—in me—breathing and speaking! Mother—I sacrificed myself for a sight-tube as long as a finger—Mother—I gave myself for the sake of the sight-tube—Mother—I died all over my whole body—and all that remained alive in me were my two eyes! I poured my wages

upon the table before you—you did not catch the coin in your apron—it rolled upon the floor—Mother—you no longer bend down to pick it up! Do not pick it up—do not pile it into stacks—you cannot build a house for your son with such columns! He lives in a glass capsule, narrow and poisonous—in the sight-tube—Read the tables in the office and see if you can find the price of a Mother—for my blood and the blood of my Mother—for it was blood that these eyes drank at the sight-tube. Count up your earnings, the premiums, the profits we share—are they enough to pay for a Mother and a Mother's son? The eyes fixed upon the sight-tube brought their profit—but the son came out of it with empty hands. Ought he not charge Heaven and Earth with this great debt? Is he not willing to accept a mere trifle in payment for this debt? What is this worth in comparison with his sacrifice? The Engineer? Only the Engineer! and my eyes look past the Mother and stare at the sight-tube—only the Engineer—only the Engineer!

Workman [below the platform]. I am a son!

[WORKMAN on platform descends among them.]

Workman [now on platform]. Woman—your wedding-day will come once more! That day—with its morning, its noon and its evening will be yours once more! It will be the day—and all the other days that follow it will not seem like days at all. Your husband will go rolling back and forth again on the iron car—forwards and backwards—a man attached to a foot that operates a switch—Why don't you laugh—you whose whole life is crammed into a single day!—a man and a woman with a whole day between them—is it not a waste of time while the iron car is whizzing to and fro?—Doesn't the dancing foot feel for the switch-block even in the dance?—Can the piano shut out the sound of the iron wheels grinding the tracks? No, not a single day belongs to you—or to your man!—the iron car keeps rolling, and the foot controls it, and the beat of it holds the man. Can a drop out of a bucket grow into a river—can one day out of a thousand days make up a life? Do not be deceived by the profits: no real profits could be spent in one day!—You have your profits—but you do not live! What good to you are profits—profits made by the foot—profits which make a man poor in living?—You have lost time—and so you have lost

life—you have lost everything—time and life—and you should spit upon these gains which are worthless in the face of what you have lost! Cry out your losses—fill your mouths with fury and curses, cry out: We have lost time and life—shout!—shout!—shout! Shout your demand—shout your will—shout what you want—shout if only to prove you have a voice—shout merely to shout—the Engineer!

Workmen [throughout the entire hall]. Shout! shout!

[The WORKMAN leaves the platform.]

Workman [on the platform]. Girls and Girls—we promise you!—Women and Women—we promise you!—Mothers and Mothers—we promise you—not one of us will drive a spade into the rubbish—not one of us will lay a brick—not one of us drive home a rivet in steel—Our resolve remains unshakable—the Works will never go up—unless they give us a new Engineer! Come and crowd this hall every day—Brothers and brothers—Sons and sons—Husbands and husbands—each as determined as the other—and let there be one unbendable will in the assemblies—up with your right hands—out with the oath—no Gas—if this Engineer remains!

All Men, All Women. No Gas!—if this Engineer remains!

[WORKMAN leaves the platform.]

Strange Workman. Our resolutions tally with yours—I am sent here by the men of our plant—and the plant is standing still! We are waiting, we are with you—until you give us the word to take up work again. Count upon us—state your demands!

All Men, All Women. The Engineer!

[STRANGE WORKMAN leaves the platform.]

Another STRANGE WORKMAN ascends it.]

Strange Workman. I am a stranger to you. I hail from a distant factory. I bring you this message—we have laid down our work because you are on strike. We are with you to the last. Hold out—stand firm—force your demands—for you speak in the name of all—you are responsible for all!

All Men, All Women. The Engineer!

[STRANGE WORKMAN leaves the platform.]

Workman [on platform]. We shout, but our shouts do not cause this hall to explode. Our shouts go thundering into the vault up there and echo from blocks of concrete, but they

do not go ringing out into the world.—Out! out of the hall!—make for the house—his house—thunder your cries at him who still keeps on the Engineer!—Form ranks!—march across the waste of ashes—go look him out—he cannot hear us here—he cannot hear us here!

All Men, All Women. On to the house!!—he cannot hear us here!

[The Crowd pushes tumultuously toward the doors. A stormy babble of voices.]

Voice of Billionaire's Son. I hear you—here! *[A deathly silence.]*

Voice of Billionaire's Son. I am here—in this hall—I have heard you!

[A buzzing and crrning of necks among the crowd.]

Voice of Billionaire's Son. I will answer you—here in this very hall!

[Great excitement and movement.]

Voice of Billionaire's Son. You shall listen to me now! *[A path is cleared for him.]*

Clerk [leaping upon the platform]. Don't let him speak!—Don't let him come up!—Crowd together—don't make room!—Run! run out of the hall!—run to the works!—Run!—and clean up the rubbish—put up the scaffolds—rebuild the plant!—Don't listen to him!—Don't listen to him—Don't listen to him! Run!—run!!—I'll run ahead—back to my desk!—I must write—write!—write!

[Rushes off platform.]

Billionaire's Son [on platform]. I have been in the hall from the very beginning. You could not see me, because I shouted with you. Girl, I was a brother to you—Woman, I was a husband to you—Mother, I was a son to you. Every cry that passed your lips passed my own! And now I am here. Here I stand—stand above you—because I must state the final demand which you cannot state. You make a demand, but your demand is only a sand-grain of the mountain of demands you must make. You scream and scold about a trifle. What is the Engineer? What is he to you? What can he be to you—you who have come through the fiery furnace? What can he be to you who have passed through Annihilation? What can the Engineer be to you? It is only a cry of yours, a word that means nothing, an echoing word!—I know the Engineer is like a red rag to you—the sight of him brings back the Horror to you, the mere sight of him. The Engineer and the Explosion are one—the formula could

not keep the Gas in check—this Engineer controlled this formula—and this formula brought on the Explosion. You think that you can put out the Explosion only after you have chased away the Engineer. And that is why you cry out against him.—Do you not know that the formula tallies? That it tallies, that it is correct to the very limits of calculation? You know this—yet you cry out against the Engineer!

Voices [sullenly]. The Engineer!

Billionaire's Son. Your cry comes from a deeper source! Your demand comprises much more than you demand! I urge you to demand more! *[Silence.]*

Billionaire's Son. What was there so terrible about the Explosion? What did it burn up—what did it rend apart? Did it go booming and hissing over one of you—one of you who was not already mutilated before the Explosion? Girl—your brother—was he whole?—Mother—your son, was he whole?—Woman—your man—was he whole? Was there a single man in all the works who was whole and sound? What havoc could the Explosion wreak upon you?—You who were shattered before the walls fell—you who were bleeding from many wounds before the crash came—you who were cripples—with one foot—with one hand—with two burning eyes in a dead skull—can the Engineer make this good? Can any demand make this good again? I tell you—demand more—demand more!

Girls, Women, Mothers [shrilly]. My brother!—my son!—my husband!

Billionaire's Son. Brother and Brothers—Son and Sons—Man and Men—the call goes forth, the summons soars up from this hall—over the wreckage—over the avalanches that buried brother and brothers—son and sons—man and men—and it comes circling back into your hearts—demand to be yourselves!

[Silence.]

Billionaire's Son. Demand!—and I will fulfill!—You are men—you represent Humanity—in the son, in the brother—in the husband! A thousand ties bind you to all about you. Now you are parts—each is a perfect unit in the great Commonwealth. The whole is like a body—a great, living body. Deliver yourselves from confusion—heal yourselves!—you that have been wounded—be human, human, human! *[Silence.]*

Billionaire's Son. Demand!—and I will ful-

fill! Brother—you are a man—you are Man. That hand of yours which clutched the lever shall cripple you no longer!—Son, you are a man—your eyes shall leave the sight-tube and gaze into the blue distances! Husband, you are a man—your day shall be the day of all the days you shall live! [Silence.]

Billionaire's Son. Space is yours—and all that life can give within this space—it is Earth—it is your home. You are human beings in the great house of Earth. Every wonder is known to you—your will opens the way to all things!—In you the heavens reflect themselves and the surface of the Earth is covered with the garment of many-coloured grasses—as with a flood. The day's work is great and full of gladness and full of many new inventions. But you are not inventions—you are perfected even now—complete—from this new beginning onward. You have achieved a greater humanity—after this last shift you are done with the task to which you had been pledged!—You have completed the shift, toiled to the very extreme—the dead have sanctified the ground—you, that part of you, lies buried! [Silence.]

Billionaire's Son. All that you demand—I will grant—To-morrow you shall be free human beings—in all their fulness and unity! Pastures broad and green shall be your new domains. The settlement shall cover the ashes and the wreckage which now cover the land. You are dismissed from bondage and from profit-making. You are settlers—with only simple needs and with the highest rewards—you are men—Men! [Silence.]

Billionaire's Son. Come out of the hall—come, walk upon the new homesteads—take measure of the land! No great effort is needed—but all creation waits—limitless—vast! Come out of the hall—come into the open! [He leaves the platform.] [Silence.]

[The ENGINEER stands upon the platform.]

A Voice [shrilly]. The Engineer!

Engineer. I am here!—Listen to me: I will bow to your will—I will go. I will take upon me the great shame which will be branded upon my brow—if I should go. I will take upon me all the curses which go howling up against me—and my departure shall be the confession of my monstrous guilt. I will be guilty—as you wish!—I will go—so that you may return to the works!—The way is free—it leads back to the works!

Billionaire's Son [from below]. Come out of the hall!—and build up the colony!

Engineer. Stay here!—stay here in this hall!—my voice is big enough for all of you—here you can hear me thunder!

Billionaire's Son. Come out of the hall!

Engineer. Stay in the hall—refuse to be frauds! [Growls and murmurs.]

Billionaire's Son. Hatred is still at work here—outside the winds will sweep it away.

Engineer. You cheat the very shame with which you would scorch me. I am going—and you must go—back to work!

Billionaire's Son. Fling open the doors—out!—into the daylight!

Engineer. You must go back to the works.—Do not pile fraud upon fraud—do not betray yourselves. Face the victory you have won—the victory that crowns you—Gas!—It is *your* work which creates these miracles in steel. Power, infinite power, throbs in the machines which you set going—Gas!—*You* give speed to the trains which go thundering your triumphs over bridges which *you* rivet. *You* launch leviathans upon the seas, and *you* divide the seas into tracks which *your* compasses decree! You build steep and trembling towers into the air which goes singing about the antennae from which the sparks speak to all the world! *You* lift motors from the earth and these go howling through the air out of sheer fury against the annihilation of their weight! You who are by nature so defenceless that any animal may attack and destroy you—you who are vulnerable in every pore of your skin—you are the victors of the world! [Profound silence.]

Billionaire's Son [at the foot of the platform, pointing at the ENGINEER]. He is once more showing you the pretty picture-book—of your childhood days. He would tempt you with memories. But you are no longer children—for now you have become adult!

Engineer. You are heroes in soot and sweat.—You are heroes at the lever—at the sight-tube—at the switch-block. You persist grandly, immovably, amidst the lashing of the pulleys and the thumping and thundering of the pistons!—And even the greatest ordeal of all cannot appal you for long—the Explosion!

Billionaire's Son. Come out of the hall!

Engineer. Where would you go?—would you leave your kingdom and enter a sheepfold? Go pottering from early till late in the tiny quadrangle of your farms? Plant paltry

weeds with those hands of yours—hands that created towering forces? And your passion for work—shall it serve merely to nourish you—and no longer create?

Billionaire's Son. Come out of the hall!

Engineer. Here you are rulers—in these works where the motive power of the whole world is born—you create Gas! There is your rule, your mastery—the empire you have established—shift upon shift—day and night—full of feverish work! Would you barter this power for the blade of grass that sprouts as it will?—Here you are rulers—there you are—peasants!

A Voice [crying]. Peasants!

Other Voices. Peasants!

More Voices. Peasants!

All Men, All Women [a torrent of shouts and upflung fists]. Peasants!!!

Engineer [stands there in a triumphant attitude].

Billionaire's Son [at foot of the platform]. Will you listen to him—or to me?

All Men, All Women. To the Engineer!

Engineer. The Explosion has not sapped your courage! Who gives in to Fear?

Billionaire's Son. I do not wish you to fear.—Is it not I who make the greater demands upon your courage?—Do I not ask you to realise—Man? How can you become peasants again—after you have been workmen?—Do we not expect you to climb still higher? The peasant in you has been overcome—and now the Workman must be overcome—and Man must be the goal! This mission thrusts you forward—not backward. Have you not ripened—after this last experience? How far could you still go—working with your hands—working in shifts?—Are your thundering trains, and vaulting bridges and flying motors sufficient recompense for your fever? No, you would laugh at the miserable wages!—Are you tempted by the rich profits which we share? But you waste these again—as you waste yourselves!—The fever is in you—a madness of toil, which brings forth nothing. It is you that the fever eats. It is not your house that you build! You are not the wardens—you sit in the cells! You are pent about by walls, and these walls are the work of your own hands. Come forth! I say, come forth! You are heroes—who do not fear the new adventure! You do not fear to go to the end of the road—terror cannot palsy your steps! The road has come to an

end—exalt your courage with fresh courage—Man has arrived!

Engineer. You would be peasants, slaves to grubbing toil!

Billionaire's Son. You are men—in all your Wholeness and all your Oneness!

Engineer. Petty needs will mock your rightful claims!

Billionaire's Son. All that you hope for you shall receive!

Engineer. Your days would be lost in sloth!

Billionaire's Son. You are working at a timeless task!

Engineer. Not a single invention could take form!

Billionaire's Son. You are honourably discharged—you are promoted—to human be—

Engineer [holding a revolver over his head]. Shout—and let destruction come!

Billionaire's Son. Leave destruction and come forth to the consummation—of Humanity!

Engineer. Shout!—and your shout shall destroy me—but go back to work!

[*The muzzle at his temple. Silence.*]

Engineer. Dare the word!

Voice [suddenly]. The Engineer shall lead us!

Voices and Voices. The Engineer shall lead us!

All Men, All Women. The Engineer shall lead us!

Engineer. Come out of the hall!—back to the works!—From Explosion to Explosion!—Gas!!

All Women, All Men. Gas!

[*The ENGINEER leaves the platform.*

Broad doors are flung open. The WORKERS stream out.]

Billionaire's Son [tottering upon the platform]. Do not strike down your brother Man! You shall not manufacture cripples! You, Brother, are more than a hand! You, Son, are more than a pair of eyes!—You, Husband, live longer than one day!—You are eternal creatures—and perfect from the very beginning!—do not let the days mutilate you, nor dumb mechanical movements of the hand—be greater, be greedy for the higher thing—in yourselves—in yourselves!!

[*Empty hall.*]

Billionaire's Son [summoning up all his strength]. I have seen man—I must protect him against himself!

ACT FIVE

A wall of brick or concrete, partly shattered and blackened by the Explosion. A wide iron gate, thrown from its hinges, in the centre of this wall. A waste of rubbish.

Outside the gate a soldier with rifle and fixed bayonet.

The BILLIONAIRE'S SON with a bandage about his head, standing in the shelter of the wall.

An OFFICER, a CAPTAIN, in a waiting attitude, in the centre.

Billionaire's Son. It is all a horrible mistake. I must speak—I must explain.

Captain. They met you with a volley of stones.

Billionaire's Son. They would not do it a second time—when they see that they have injured me.

Captain. I would not be so sure of that.

Billionaire's Son. The sight of the soldiers angers them. That is the real reason.

Captain. You sought this shelter yourself.

Billionaire's Son. Not for myself. I wanted to shut off the works. I could do that in three or four words.

Captain. They won't let you speak even one word.

Billionaire's Son. But surely they would not attack me—when I want to justify myself!

Captain. Keep close to the wall!

Billionaire's Son. Will you escort me out?

Captain. No.

Billionaire's Son. No?

Captain. They might also attack me—and I should be obliged to open fire.

Billionaire's Son. No, no, not that!—I must wait then, until they come to their senses!

[The SOLDIER before the gate is relieved by another SOLDIER. Cries and clamour from thousands of throats.]

Billionaire's Son. What are they shouting for now?

Captain. The sentry is being relieved.

Billionaire's Son. This confusion is terrible! Can't they understand what I am after? They are my brethren—I am merely older, more mature—and must keep my hand over them!

[Enter the GOVERNMENT COMMISSIONER from the right.]

Government Commissioner [at the gate, peering out]. The situation looks serious! *[To the CAPTAIN].* Are you prepared for all emergencies?

Captain. Machine-guns.

[The tumult without has arisen afresh and continues until the GOVERNMENT COMMISSIONER moves away from the gate.]

Government Commissioner [to BILLIONAIRE'S SON, lifting his top-hat, and looking for papers in his portfolio]. The extraordinary and dangerous developments in your works have compelled the Government to discuss the situation with you. May I present my authorisation?

Billionaire's Son [taking the paper, reading, looking up]. Full powers?

Government Commissioner. Under certain conditions. Shall we proceed to negotiations—here?

Billionaire's Son. I shall not leave this place.

Government Commissioner [putting the paper back into his portfolio, taking out another]. The events which have led up to this strike may, no doubt, be summarized as follows:—After the catastrophe the workmen refused to take up the rebuilding of the plant because certain conditions which they had made were not accepted by you, these conditions involving the discharge of the Engineer.

Billionaire's Son. That would not have prevented fresh catastrophes!

Government Commissioner. The Government can recognise only facts.

Billionaire's Son. But the Explosion is certain to occur again—there is only this formula—only this—or no Gas!

Government Commissioner. Future eventualities cannot be accepted as evidence. The condition imposed by the Workmen was rejected by you. As a consequence the Workmen continue the strike—which has now spread to neighbouring works, and is extending itself from day to day.

Billionaire's Son. Yes! Yes!

Government Commissioner. In the meantime the Engineer has offered his resignation at a meeting of the Workmen. A sudden change of feeling on the part of the Workmen induced them to drop their demand, and now they wish the Engineer to remain.

Billionaire's Son. Yes!

Government Commissioner. The cause of the strike has thereby been done away with, and the Workmen are willing to take up work again.

Billionaire's Son. As you see—they are clamoring to get in.

Government Commissioner. But now you have issued an order forbidding them to return. You declare that you could not possibly render yourself responsible for the production of Gas!

Billionaire's Son. No—for the destruction of human life!

Government Commissioner. The Government is fully cognisant of the uncommon severity of the misfortune which has regrettably taken place.

Billionaire's Son. That says little.

Government Commissioner. The number of victims has called forth the greatest sympathy. The Government is preparing a vote of condolence in Parliament. The Government is of the opinion that in making this proclamation in so conspicuous a place it has done full justice to you and to the Workmen.

Billionaire's Son. Yes. The Government has no power beyond this. The rest will be my task.

Government Commissioner. It is with the gravest concern that the Government has heard of your further intentions of permanently keeping the works from being rebuilt.

Billionaire's Son. You must not doubt my powers—I will carry out my plans!

Government Commissioner [drawing forth a new paper]. A conference as to how this danger may best be averted has already taken place.

Billionaire's Son. Give me a few soldiers—and give me a guarantee that I shall be heard—out there!

Government Commissioner. The danger involved in a stoppage of the production of Gas has induced the Government to make you a confidential communication.

Billionaire's Son [staring at him]. You—demand—Gas!

Government Commissioner. The whole armament industry is operating upon a basis of Gas. The lack of this motive power would inflict great damage upon the manufacture of war material. And a war is imminent. Our programme of armaments cannot be carried out without this supply of energy. It is this solemn contingency which forces the Government to declare that it cannot any longer tolerate a delay in the delivery of Gas to the armament plants!

Billionaire's Son. Am—I—not—my—own—master—on—my—own—ground?

Government Commissioner. The Govern-

ment is impelled by a sincere desire to come to an understanding with you. It is prepared to further the reconstruction by every means in its power. Toward this end it has ordered four hundred motor-lorries, with tools and workmen—they will be here in the course of the hour. The clearance of the wreckage can be taken in hand at once.

Billionaire's Son. —To make weapons—to be used against human beings!

Government Commissioner. I trust that you will treat my communication with the utmost secrecy.

Billionaire's Son. I—I will bellow it out—I will look for confidants in every nook and corner!

Government Commissioner. I can well understand your excitement. But the Government is fain to face with a grim necessity.

Billionaire's Son. Do not blaspheme! It is Man alone who is necessary!—Why must you inflict new wounds upon him—we find it so hard to cure the old!—Let me talk to them—I must go —

[At the gate. He is greeted with howls.]

Captain [pulling him back]. You will unloose the storm!

Billionaire's Son [tottering against the wall]. —Are we all mad? —

Government Commissioner. It is important that the Government should know whether or not you intend to persist in your refusal to let the Workmen recommence work?

Billionaire's Son. Now—more than ever, I regard it as my duty—to refuse.

Government Commissioner. You persist in your former refusal?

Billionaire's Son. As long as I can breathe and speak!

Government Commissioner. I must then make use of the power imposed in me by the Government. In view of the danger which threatens the defence of the Realm, the Government is obliged to dispossess you of your works for the time being and to carry on the manufacture of Gas under Government control. The reconstruction of the works will take place at the expense of the Government and will be taken in hand at once. We trust that we may count upon your making no attempt at resistance. We should greatly regret being forced to adopt more rigorous measures against you!—Captain, open the gates—I wish to communicate the essential points to the Workmen.

[At the gate. A stormy tumult breaks loose.]

Captain. Stand back!—stones!

Government Commissioner [retreating to the shelter of the wall]. This is incredible!

[The uproar continues.]

Government Commissioner. These people simply hinder—

Billionaire's Son. I do not fear them—

[At the gate. The uproar at its maximum.]

Billionaire's Son [holds up his arms on high.]

[The surge of the tumult draws nearer.]

Captain [shouting to the Government Commissioner]. They are coming!

[He goes through the gate—issues orders towards the left. A machine-gun detachment comes and takes up position. The CAPTAIN stands, holding his naked sword over his head, prepared to give the signal. Deep silence.]

Government Commissioner [close to the BILLIONAIRE'S SON]. Why won't you forestall this bloodshed?

Billionaire's Son [stands as though stunned.]

Government Commissioner. Here [he hands him his white handkerchief]. They will understand this sign. Wave this white flag!

Billionaire's Son [obeys mechanically].

Government Commissioner. You see—that works— They are dropping their stones! [To the CAPTAIN]. Throw the gates wide open! [Soldiers throw open the gates]. Withdraw the cordon! [The CAPTAIN and the machine-gun detachment withdraw. To the BILLIONAIRE'S SON.] I will go tell them at what point the lorries will deliver the tools. I'll lead the people there myself!

[He goes through the gate. Soon after high, clear shouts and cheers are heard without—these grow rapidly fainter. Silence.]

Billionaire's Son [sinks upon a heap of debris.]

[Enter the DAUGHTER—in black.]

Daughter [goes up to him—puts her arms about his shoulders.]

Billionaire's Son [looks up in surprise].

Daughter. Do you not know me?

Billionaire's Son. Daughter!—in black!

Daughter. My husband is dead.

Billionaire's Son. Have you come to reproach me—Will you, too, cast a stone upon me?

Daughter [shakes her head]. Are you all alone here?

Billionaire's Son. Yes, I am alone at last—

like all men who wish to give themselves to all men!

Daughter [touching the bandage about his forehead]. Did they strike you?

Billionaire's Son. They struck me—struck me, too. There are bolts that rebound and wound both—the archer and the target.

Daughter. Is all danger over?

Billionaire's Son. Are men born? Born of women—men who do not scream nor make horrible threats? Has Time lost count of itself—and thrust Mankind into the light? What does Man look like?

Daughter. Tell me!

Billionaire's Son. I have lost all memory of Man. What was he like? [He takes her hands.] Here are hands—and growing to these—[taking her by the arms]—are limbs, members—and the body unites them—parts that are active, parts of the whole, and all a part of life—!

Daughter. Tell me!

Billionaire's Son. The torrent rages too hideously—it overflows the banks. Cannot a dam be built which will hold in the flood? Cannot this raging be bounded, cannot it be used to water the barren places of the Earth and convert them into pastures of peaceful green? Is there no halting? [He draws his DAUGHTER close to him.] Tell me, where can I find Man? When will he make his appearance—when will he announce his name—Man? When will he understand himself? And plant the Tree of his Knowledge of Himself? When will he rid himself of the primal curse?—when will he re-create the creation which he has ruined—Man?—Was I not happy in having had a glimpse of him and his coming?—Did I not behold him clearly with all the symbols of his fullness of power—silent, yet speaking the tongue that all the world understands?—Man! Was Man not close to me—Mankind? Can Man be extinguished—must he not come again and again—now that at least one man has seen his face? Must he not arrive—to-morrow or the day after to-morrow—every day—every hour? Am I not a witness for him—and for his lineage and his advent?—Do I not know him—his bold, beautiful face? Can I doubt any longer?

Daughter [sinking on her knees before him.] I will give him birth.

THE END

GAS—PART II

BY GEORG KAISER

Translated from the German by WINIFRED KATZIN

CHARACTERS

THE BILLIONAIRE WORKER
THE CHIEF ENGINEER

FIRST
SECOND
THIRD
FOURTH } FIGURES IN BLUE
FIFTH
SIXTH
SEVENTH }

FIRST
SECOND
THIRD
FOURTH } FIGURES IN YELLOW
FIFTH
SIXTH
SEVENTH }

*Workers: Men, Women, Old Men, Old Women,
Youths and Girls*

*The action takes place in the same country as that of "Gas I," but a
generation later*

GAS—PART II

ACT ONE

Concrete Hall. Light falls in dusty beams from arc-lamp. From misty height of dome dense wires vertically to iron platform, thence diagonally distributed to small iron tables—three right, three left. Red wires to the left, green to the right. At each table a FIGURE IN BLUE—seated stiffly, uniformed—gazing into glass pane in the table which, lighting up, reflects its colour on the face above it, red to the left, green to the right. Across and further down, a longer iron table chequered like a chess-board with green and red plugs—operated by the FIRST FIGURE IN BLUE. For a time, silence.

Second Figure in Blue [at red pane]. Report from third fighting-sector—Enemy concentration preparing. [Pane dark.]

First Figure in Blue [switches red plug].

Fifth Figure in Blue [at green pane]. Report from third works—production one lot below contract. [Pane dark.]

First Figure in Blue [switches green plug].

Third Figure in Blue [at red pane]. Report from second fighting-sector—Enemy concentration preparing. [Pane dark.]

First Figure in Blue [switches red plug].

Sixth Figure in Blue [at green pane]. Report from second works—production one lot below contract. [Pane dark.]

First Figure in Blue [switches green plug].

Fourth Figure in Blue [at red pane]. Report from first fighting-sector—Enemy concentration preparing. [Pane dark.]

First Figure in Blue [switches red plug].

Seventh Figure in Blue [at green pane]. Report from first works—production two lots below contract. [Pane dark.]

First Figure in Blue [switches green plug]. [Silence.]

Second Figure in Blue [at red pane]. Report from third fighting-sector—enemy sweeping forward. [Pane dark.]

First Figure in Blue [switches red plug].

Fifth Figure in Blue [at green pane]. Report from third works—production three lots below contract. [Pane dark.]

First Figure in Blue [switches green plug].

Third Figure in Blue [at red pane]. Report

from second fighting-sector—enemy sweeping forward. [Pane dark.]

First Figure in Blue [switches red plug].

Sixth Figure in Blue [at green pane]. Report from second works—production five lots below contract. [Pane dark.]

First Figure in Blue [switches green plug].

Fourth Figure in Blue [at red pane]. Report from first fighting-sector—enemy sweeping forward.

First Figure in Blue [switches red plug].

Seventh Figure in Blue [at green pane]. Report from third fighting-sector—enemy breaking through. [Pane dark.]

First Figure in Blue [switches green plug]. [Silence.]

Second Figure in Blue [at red pane]. Report from third fighting-sector—enemy breaking through. [Pane dark.]

First Figure in Blue [switches red plug].

Fifth Figure in Blue [at green pane]. Report from third works—production nine lots below contract. [Pane dark.]

First Figure in Blue [switches green plug].

Third Figure in Blue [at red pane]. Report from second fighting-sector—enemy breaking through.

First Figure in Blue [switches red plug].

Sixth Figure in Blue [at green pane]. Report from second works—production eleven lots below contract. [Pane dark.]

First Figure in Blue [switches green plug].

Fourth Figure in Blue [at red pane]. Report from first fighting-sector—enemy breaking through. [Pane dark.]

First Figure in Blue [switches red plug].

Seventh Figure in Blue [at green pane]. Report from first works—production twelve lots below contract. [Pane dark.]

First Figure in Blue [into telephone by him]. The chief engineer!

The Chief Engineer [comes in: aged in petrification of fanatical working energy, gaunt profile, white streak in hair, white smock].

First Figure in Blue. Control stations report less production of gas. Is defaults against Must by twelve lots.

Chief Engineer. Collapse of workers at pressure-gauges, at switch-gears, at levers.

First Figure in Blue. Why no substitutes?

Chief Engineer. Each shift combed of each superfluous man or woman.

First Figure in Blue. Disease?

Chief Engineer. Then without visible sign.

First Figure in Blue. Delivery of food unhindered?

Chief Engineer. Supply continuous, variety, plenty.

First Figure in Blue. Disappointment over payment out of profits to be shared?

Chief Engineer. Already profits in net cash stuff wide even boys' pockets.

First Figure in Blue. Then how do you account for . . . the discrepancy?

Chief Engineer. Movement creates its own law. Excessive repetition of single action blunts the onspurring will to work. Gas is no longer a goal—purpose vanished in the little motion which repeated and repeated became purposeless, part without whole. Planless the man at his tool—the work withdrew ever farther out of sight as the man slipped day by day ever deeper into sameness and monotony. Wheel by wheel in whirling hum yet never clogged within next wheel and next wheel. Motion roaring upwards into emptiness and, unresisted, hurtling down to earth again.

First Figure in Blue. Can you discover no means by which to assure production?

Chief Engineer. New masses of workers to the machines.

First Figure in Blue. Not to be found after sevenfold siftings.

Chief Engineer. Children are already on full time.

First Figure in Blue. Then what?

Chief Engineer. Upleaping increase of gas deficit.

First Figure in Blue [pointing to table]. Do you see this? Calculation of attack and defence—comparison of force on either side.

Chief Engineer. Red dominates.

First Figure in Blue. Enemy spreads.

Chief Engineer. Green recedes.

First Figure in Blue. Gas withholds defence. [CHIEF ENGINEER silent.] This table works out the sum. We lack numbers, but our technical equipment is superior. That balances the outcome. So long as we maintain our technical strength. . . . With the impetus of the gas which we alone produce, our technical force far exceeds the enemy's. One lot of gas short of what is calculated here

—and we lose our chance of salvation more completely than we have lost it already.

Chief Engineer [staring]. Then the possibility of our crushing the enemy is no longer . . . ?

First Figure in Blue. Chimera now!

Chief Engineer. The end?

First Figure in Blue. At best a draw with both sides check-mate. [CHIEF ENGINEER catches at table for support.] It simplifies the issue. It fell out the only possible way. Fight and downfall. Attack and resistance to the last on either side. Adversary against adversary to the last drop of blood, and they fall together. The enfeebled remnant that remains soon vanishes. None escape from that annihilation. [strongly.] This is knowledge only we possess!

Chief Engineer [pulling himself together]. Then what?

First Figure in Blue. Increase in production of gas without consideration of man, woman, or child. No more shifts—let one shift overlap the other without release. Every last hand mobilised from collapse to collapse. No rest, no respite. Let the last dead hand fall from the lever, the last dead foot slip off the switch-pedal, the last glazed eye turn sightless from the pressure-gauge—let this table here show: The last enemy wiped off the face of the earth, our last fighter dead at his post.

Chief Engineer [tensely]. I will fulfill that order.

First Figure in Blue [stretching out his hand]. In with us, into the tunnel that has no exit.

Chief Engineer [taking his hand]. Gas!

[He goes. Outside nearby, high, shrill sirens, others farther off—fainter—silence.]

First Figure in Blue [into telephone]. The Billionaire Worker. [he comes—middle twenties—worker's dress, shaved head, barefoot.] Is this your shift?

Billionaire Worker. No, but the relay summons has just sounded.

First Figure in Blue. Prematurely.

Billionaire Worker. You must have been forced into that decision.

First Figure in Blue. Under what compulsion?

Billionaire Worker. No worker can manage the earlier shift.

First Figure in Blue. What is your advice?

Billionaire Worker. What value has my advice here?

First Figure in Blue. You heard—I put the question to you.

Billionaire Worker. You can inform yourself by asking any worker in the factories.

First Figure in Blue. I ask no worker—I want my information from the chief.

Billionaire Worker. What chief?

First Figure in Blue [looking at him intently]. The one who stands before me.

Billionaire Worker. Is this your abdication?

First Figure in Blue. The new task demands redoubled strength. The chief and we unite our efforts.

Billionaire Worker. What do you want of us?

First Figure in Blue. Gas with tenfold energy.

Billionaire Worker [with a shrug]. You decide the production.

First Figure in Blue. That does not suffice. The workers are slack. They're soft—orders would run to water in their brains instead of stiffening them to action.

Billionaire Worker. Make your punishments harder.

First Figure in Blue. And take them off their work. . . .

Billionaire Worker. Can none be spared?

First Figure in Blue. From the last great spending of our forces? No. Annihilation on both sides—but annihilation!

Billionaire Worker [flinches, recovers himself]. What do you want of me?

First Figure in Blue. To send through the whole works a galvanizing current. Fanatise them for the final ruin. Hate and pride can kindle a fever to heat the coldest veins for once—night will become day in the struggle to reach the goal that blood-red beacon lights.

Billionaire Worker. Is that the goal?

First Figure in Blue. Which your voice shall announce. Go amongst them in all the shops—let your words sound amidst the roar of the pistons and the hum of turning belts—overcome that din with your shout to arms that shows them the goal and lends meaning to their effort. Hands will grasp levers with new strength—feet tighten on the switch-pedals—eyes clear at the pressure-gauges. The floodgates of work shall open wide and gas overpower power.

Billionaire Worker [very calm]. I am due for punishment if I miss my shift.

First Figure in Blue. You are no longer a worker.

Billionaire Worker. You have no power to dismiss any worker in this factory.

First Figure in Blue. I lay you under special contract.

Billionaire Worker. I decline to accept it.

First Figure in Blue. Do you wish to make conditions?

Billionaire Worker. I repeat the only one which is the one my mother and my mother's father demanded: Set this factory free.

First Figure in Blue [fiercely]. Your grandfather and your mother protested against the production of gas. Therefore it became necessary to use force in the works. Otherwise our preparations for this war would have come to a standstill.

Billionaire Worker. Therefore their implacable refusal.

First Figure in Blue. We are engaged in a war such as no party was ever involved in before.

Billionaire Worker. I have obeyed every order in silence.

First Figure in Blue. The time has come now for you to speak.

Billionaire Worker. Against myself and against my mother?

First Figure in Blue. For the workers who want gas. After the explosion they came back—they rebuilt the factory—they stayed in the shops in spite of danger that hourly threatened. They bowed in willingness before their master, whose name then was gas, whose name today is downfall if a voice they will heed will make it known to them. Yours is that voice—at your "yes" the "yes" of thousands will light the train of fire for the ultimate destruction. Come over to us, and the half-dead will spring to life again throughout these works.

Billionaire Worker. I defend the legacy of my grandfather.

First Figure in Blue. The workers themselves laughed his plans to scorn.

Billionaire Worker. The form for people will manifest itself.

First Figure in Blue. For others who survive. There is no future for us.

Billionaire Worker. There is always a way out.

First Figure in Blue. Do you seek one without us?

Billionaire Worker. With you and within you.

First Figure in Blue [after a moment's reflection]. We shall achieve by punishment the output we require.

[He makes a gesture of dismissal. The BILLIONAIRE WORKER goes. Silence.]

Second Figure in Blue [at red pane]. Report from third fighting-sector—enemy pressure irresistible. [Pane dark.]

First Figure in Blue [switches red plug.]

Third Figure in Blue [at red pane]. Report from second fighting-sector—enemy pressure irresistible. [Pane dark.]

First Figure in Blue [switches red plug.]

Fourth Figure in Blue [at red pane]. Report from first fighting-sector—enemy pressure irresistible. [Pane dark.]

First Figure in Blue [springs up]. No report from the factories?

Chief Engineer [enters hastily].

Chief Engineer. Turmoil everywhere! Shift-changes hitched! Relief gang and gang on duty cease to cog! For the first time a gap opens in a system that has been flawless all the years. The pendulum swings wild! The machine has stalled.

First Figure in Blue. Your organisation?

Chief Engineer. Announced by sirens! Answered by the gang on duty with laying-down of tools—and by the relief-gang with ignoring it.

First Figure in Blue. Is anyone inciting them to resist?

Chief Engineer. Not a wheel-minder among them! It's the machine that is running wild—and it's running wild because its works are moving to a different rhythm. The new distribution of time has disturbed the old pace and drags it down to seconds which suffice for remembrance to remember themselves! Lightning flashes in heads and illuminates the path they have been driven along these years upon years! The tumult becomes a face grinning its hideousness into their horror-frozen minds!

First Figure in Blue. Then——strike?

Chief Engineer. What is that?

First Figure in Blue. Are they leaving switch-gear, lever, observation dial?

Chief Engineer. Already happenings of the past! Standstill turned into movement!

First Figure in Blue. Commotion?

Chief Engineer. Flaming through the shops!

Not a voice—not a cry—no eloquence! Silence of ice—gazing before them—or stealing a glance at the next man who does likewise at his neighbour, and so on from partner to partner! It is out of their eyes it's coming—this thing that is on its way to shatter us to bits—this tempest!

First Figure in Blue. A cordon round the shops—anyone attempting to leave to be stopped at the gates!

Chief Engineer. Is there still time?

Fifth Figure in Blue [at green pane]. Report from third works. . . .

Chief Engineer [goes to him—reading off]. Work stands still—workers leaving shops!

First Figure in Blue. Lock the others in.

Sixth Figure in Blue [at green pane]. Report from second works. . . .

Chief Engineer. Work stands still. . . .

Seventh Figure in Blue [at green pane]. Report from first works. . . .

Chief Engineer. Workers leaving shops!

First Figure in Blue. Alarm throughout the works!

Chief Engineer. Too late! We're crushed under the weight of their numbers. See it towering fearfully over us, the wave about to break. We have brought it towering over our heads—they come and we are here!

First Figure in Blue. Are they through?

Chief Engineer. In inevitable march. The line presses back upon the place we drove them from. There the storm gathers, there, when it breaks, it shall strike us—if we are here for the striking.

First Figure in Blue [flinging the plugs together in disorder]. The calculation did not come out—there was a remainder!

[He goes out with the CHIEF ENGINEER and the FIGURES IN BLUE. The hall remains empty. Then an ever-swell-ing crowd of people emerge in a circle against the dim grey walls—men young and middle-aged, old men, boys, in gray workers' clothes, shorn-headed and barefoot; women, young and middle-aged, old women, girls, in the same clothes, barefoot, with gray kerchiefs close round their hair. A short distance from the tables the dead, silent, forward-pressing movement stops still. The outbreak comes in a great flood—silent—yet full of haste. The tables are overturned and passed from hand to hand until they vanish

into the shadowy edge of the hall; the wires from platform to tables, from dome to platform, are torn away. Then utter silence. The women pull the kerchiefs off their heads and begin to smooth their hair.]

All [looking at one another—in a great shout]. No gas!

ACT TWO

Concrete hall. Dimmer light from the arc-lamps. Hall full.

Voices [rising clear through a murmurous swell]. What of us?

Girl [on the platform—spreading her hair]. Morning for us—day with a morning so filled with joy in light that it postpones the noon! Radiance streams from that morning, dawning as no morning dawned for us before. We open eyes of awe upon that wider vision, chaos of light in white and many colours . . . the wonder passes and is retrospect. Morning-for me leads my lover to me by the hand.

Young Worker [beside girl on the platform]. Morning for you and me and our fulfilment. Empty were being and seeking from day to day, neither yours nor mine until this bright morning. Now the locked waters flow once more, tide strong against the shore, riotous with colour, loud with wedding joy!

Girl [embracing him]. Morning for you!

Young Worker [holding her]. Morning for you.

Girls and Young Workers [pressing about the platform—embracing]. Morning for us.

Voices of the Others. More for us!

Woman [on the platform]. Noon for us. Out of that beginning I had not yet drawn the arc that sweeps towards the height—it crept flat along the ground. Between man and wife nothing lay behind the morning—the dead husk rustled, riveting but not uniting. Now it showers out of the brightness, and the rainbow shines overhead. The clouds flaunt gold, they vanish in fire of glory the sky around, raining beneficence, warming and nourishing the dead-brittle crust. Man and wife at noon, one life, one breath, absorbed and welded, indistinguishable. Demands shall be answered, last and first, the answer rings forth with a noonday clamour through the blue noon over us.

Man [beside her on the platform]. Noon

streams from you, driving a swarm of blue-rimmed clouds. Noon spread over me like a tent of permanence—bounding the space where I am yours. No exit to seduce where nothing serves—no will that defies where nothing signifies—the syllable is breathed and understanding outreaches further words where both command. Desire grew bold, immeasurable—body binds body, mated—our law is the doubling of being and being unabated, forbidding nothing, allowing nothing, for oneness knows neither pleading nor resistance and is indivisible in Man and Woman at noon.

Woman [reaching out her hands]. Noon for you!

Man [taking them]. Noon for you!

Men and Women [round the platform, seeking one another's hands]. Noon for us!

[MAN and WOMAN down from platform.]

Voices of Others. More for us!

Old Woman [on the platform]. Evening for us. Once to be still after the day's round, feet quiet in their shoes. What were morning and noon to me? No difference to me between the noon and the morning. One and the same and all the same pattern of bitter labour, slipping by like muddy trickling water over bumps in a stream-bed we can't see the bottom of. That was morning and noon for us. . . . Was I alone? Was no one by me in the beginning and after? Was I so quite alone? Did I go under with only myself, reach out my hand only for my own other hand to save me from sinking, sinking? Had I died lonely even then? . . . Evening brings life, adding all the lost hours to the hours that shall be. Time is dealt out to a new measure—I hold out my two hands and join them about nothingness—for it pours out of them—dazzled I look and see the treasure before me which noon and morning hid and evening reveals.

Old Man [beside her on the platform]. For us the evening. Rest from the aimless, driven haste; trees and shade for us now. Where whirls the tumult? Where are they hurrying? Drowsy birds twitter in the branches—wind soughs, rustles. Day ebbs away. Is it late? Morning is forcing and crowding without peace, without end. Was there loss? The curve of a lip can extravagantly bestow. You suffered no want, I promised myself nothing—and our evening discloses a plenty we shall never exhaust. [Leads her with him down from the platform.]

Old Men and Women [moving towards them—supporting one another]. Evening for us!
Voices of the Others. More for us!

A Voice. What of us?

Some Voices. More for us!

Other Voices. What of us?

A Wave of Voices. More for us!

A Counter-Wave of Voices. What of us?

Voices upon Voices [in flood and counter-flood]. More for us! What of us? [Ending in a great cry. Silence.]

A Voice. The Billionaire Worker!

All the Voices Together [swelling—uniting—triumphing]. The Billionaire Worker! [Silence.]

Billionaire Worker [ascends the platform]. I stand here, yours. Above you only by these steps I climb with my feet. [On the platform.] No mind more deep-thinking—no mouth more eloquent before you. You call to morning and to evening and to noon—and make the speakable articulate with words forever relevant. For you, Young Girl, the morning, dawn, and beginning of your life—and your sisters' here and your sisters' yet to come. That is primeval law! For you, Youth, the fire of early day, beating in blood and pulses with the first embrace—and in your brothers' here and in your brothers' yet to come. That is primeval law! For you, Woman, day big with noon, season of all fulfillment—and for all these women about you and all who are yet to come. That is primeval law! For you, Man, the high stars' brand of mighty noon—and for all these men about you and all who are yet to come. That is primeval law! For you, old men and old women, evening falling on shoulders, into laps, out of shadow and calm airs—lulling into the night that shall receive your sleep without cry, without fear. That is primeval law! [Stronger.] Day is about you again—day and its fullness, morning and noon and evening. Law is restored and shines out from new tablets. You have come home again—out of bondage—returned to the ultimate duties of life.

Voices. What of us?

Billionaire Worker. Proclaim yourselves in your self-recognition—under bitterest oppression crushed to earth—penned in slavery like beasts for the slaughter—you shall be heard! Your experience shall be your seal and oath—this is no child's play. Let your cry be heard—a truth of truths—in a great YES!

Voices upon Voices. What of us?

Billionaire Worker. Report yourselves in your unfolding! Your discovery would turn to sacrilege were you to hide what you have found. Silence would set a stain upon your souls, black and terrible, never to be effaced. The air in this house of yours will turn foul if you bar your windows shut and keep that light from shining on the streets without. You would stand cursed in that instant and forever damned.

All the Voices Together. What of us?

Billionaire Worker. Spread your tidings abroad! Send your cry forth out of this hall over all the world. Spare no labour—it shall be your last. Give of your treasure: it is inexhaustible and will return tenfold. Roll the dome clear!

[Silence.]

Voices upon Voices. Roll the dome clear!

All the Voices Together. Roll the dome clear!

Billionaire Worker. Stretch the wire that shall flash your message around the earth's circle!

Voices. Stretch the wire!

Voices upon Voices. Stretch the wire!

All the Voices Together. Stretch the wire!

Billionaire Worker. Send out the signal of truce to all the world's fighters!

Voices. Send out the signal!

Voices upon Voices. Send out the signal!

All the Voices Together. Send out the signal!

Young Worker [On the platform—arms raised to the dome]. We shall clear the dome!

[Silence.]

Voice [above]. We in the dome!

Voices [below]. Roll the dome clear!

Voice [above]. Rust clogs the grooves!

Voices [below]. Loosen the rivets!

Voice [above]. Mightily pressing. . . .

Voices [below]. Break down the girders!

Voice [above]. Plates giving way!

Voices [below]. Widen the gap!

Voice [above]. Now the dome moves!

All the Voices Together [below]. Roll the dome clear!

[A broad beam of light falls suddenly from dome to ground, and remains there erect like a shining column.

Dazzled silence—all faces raised.]

Billionaire Worker [calling upward]. Speed up the work without slacking.

Voice [above]. The wire hangs plumb.

Billionaire Worker. Make haste to be done.

Voice [above]. Wireless at summit, here in good order.

Billionaire Worker. Flash what I call!

Voice [above]. We stand by.

Billionaire. Send out the rally: hands have ceased from their work—hands have quit their slaving for destruction—hands are free to take the pressure of all hands in ours which now rest. No Gas!

Voice [above]. Hands have ceased their work—hands have quit their slaving for destruction—hands are free to take the pressure of all hands in ours which now rest. No Gas!

All the Voices Together [below]. No Gas!

Billionaire Worker. Stand by for the answer!

Voices [below]. Tell us the answer!

[*Silence.*]

Voice [above]. Answer fails!

[*Silence.*]

Billionaire Worker. Send a new call: Tumult in blood subsided—fever fell cool—sight came to eyes that look up to greet you—shift-changing turned to abidance of being—No Gas!

All the Voices Together [below]. No Gas!

Billionaire Worker. Watch for the answer!

Voices upon Voices [below]. Call down the answer!

Billionaire Worker. Keep good watch for the answer!

[*Silence.*]

Voice [above]. Answer fails!

[*Silence.*]

Billionaire Worker. Urge a reply: Land melted into land—frontiers into the all—the farthest are neighbours—joining with you we disperse among you, divided in oneness, one in division. No Gas!

Voice [above; repeating]. Land melted into land—frontiers into the all—the farthest are neighbours—joining with you we disperse among you, divided in oneness, one in division—No Gas!

All the Voices Together [below]. No Gas!

Billionaire Worker. Take the answer right!

All the Voices Together [below]. Shout us the answer!

Billionaire Worker. Take it up accurately to the last syllable.

[*Silence.*]

Voice [above]. Answer fails!

[*Dead silence.*]

Voice [from farthest rim of the crowd]. Strangers!

Voices upon Voices. The Yellow Ones!

All the Voices Together. The Enemy!

[*They fall back, making way for seven FIGURES IN YELLOW who pass between them into the centre of the hall. BILLIONAIRE WORKER staggers from the platform.*]

First Figure in Yellow. A hitch in the reckoning. A rift in the game. Yours threw the cards down, we overtrumped. Enter our losses into your books. [*Silence.*] The power of the gas you produce will serve our needs. Your work shall pay your debt but never liquidate it. Gas is our fuel. [*Silence.*] The works pass from your disposal to our commands. We scrap the schedule of your sharings. Proceeds shall concentrate out of your many hands into our few—wages for you in the minimum measure for maintenance of strength. [*Silence.*] From this hour these works resume the production of gas. You entered this hall as a crowd, you leave it as shifts—back to your service, shift succeeding shift. We are the users of gas and demand it—the Chief Engineer is the maker of gas and shall answer to us. [*CHIEF ENGINEER comes.*] The Chief Engineer stands in power over you to order and punish. [*Silence. To the CHIEF ENGINEER.*] Set the hall to rights.

Chief Engineer [calls upwards]. Roll the dome shut. [*The sunlight diminishes and is gone.*] Set up the tables. [*With noiseless and rapid obedience tables are reached over the heads of the crowd and set up in the centre.*] Stretch the wires. [*Swiftly, dully, wires are stretched from where they hang perpendicular from the dome diagonally to the tables as before.*] Recharge the lamps. [*Dusty light-beams from arc-lamps.*] To the shops, forward! [*Wordless melting away towards the edge of the hall—vanishment.*]

[*SIX FIGURES IN YELLOW sit down at the tables. FIRST FIGURE IN YELLOW arranges the plugs at the switch-board. CHIEF ENGINEER waits.*]

First Figure in Yellow [to the CHIEF ENGINEER]. Gas! [*CHIEF ENGINEER off.*]

ACT THREE

Cement hall. Dusty light beams from arc-lamp. At the tables the seven FIGURES IN YELLOW. Silence.

Second Figure in Yellow [at red pane]. Report

from requisitions headquarters—two quotas more required for third district.

[*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Yellow [switches red plug].

Fifth Figure in Yellow [at green pane]. Report from third works: Production one lot below contract.

[*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Yellow [switches green plug].

Third Figure in Yellow [at red pane]. Report from requisitions headquarters: Three quotas more required for second district.

[*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Yellow [switches red plug].

Sixth Figure in Yellow [at green pane]. Report from second works: Production one lot below contract.

[*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Yellow [switches green plug].

Fourth Figure in Yellow [at red pane]. Report from requisitions headquarters: Four quotas more required for first district.

[*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Yellow [switches red plug].

Seventh Figure in Yellow [at green pane]. Report from first works: Production two lots under contract.

[*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Yellow [switches green plug].

[*Silence.*]

Second Figure in Yellow [at red pane]. Report from requisitions headquarters: Five quotas more required for third district.

[*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Yellow [switches red plug].

Fifth Figure in Yellow [at green pane]. Report from third works: Production six lots under contract.

[*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Yellow [switches green plug].

Third Figure in Yellow [at red pane]. Report from requisitions headquarters: Eight quotas more required for second district.

[*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Yellow [switches red plug].

Sixth Figure in Yellow [at green pane]. Report from second works: Production ten lots under contract.

[*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Yellow [switches green plug].

Fourth Figure in Yellow [at red pane]. Report from requisitions headquarters: Eleven quotas more required for first district.

[*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Yellow [switches red plug].

Seventh Figure in Yellow [at green pane]. Report from first works: Production twelve lots under contract.

[*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Yellow [springs up—telephones]. The Chief Engineer! [CHIEF EN-

GINEER comes—without haste.] Check-up stations; verify decreased production of gas. Is defaults against *Must* by twelve lots.

Chief Engineer [calmly]. Are you astonished?

First Figure in Yellow. Does personal opinion enter?

Chief Engineer [shrugging shoulders]. If you can deny yourself.

First Figure in Yellow. Automaton as all are here.

Chief Engineer. The automata in the shops are moving fast with accessory sounds.

First Figure in Yellow. Buzzing what?

Chief Engineer. "Not for me."

First Figure in Yellow. Meaning?

Chief Engineer. This hand lifting lever—not for me. This foot pressing switch-pedal—not for me. These eyes watching pressure-gauge—not for me.

First Figure in Yellow. Do you know your responsibility?

Chief Engineer. Gas.

First Figure in Yellow. You will be held to account for every minus in delivery.

Chief Engineer [peculiarly]. I am prepared—for the reckoning.

First Figure in Yellow. You applied your powers?

Chief Engineer [as before]. Not yet.

First Figure in Yellow. You inflicted no punishments?

Chief Engineer. Upon whom?

First Figure in Yellow. The hand that falters at the lever—the foot that misses the switch-pedal—the eyes that blink before the pressure-gauge.

Chief Engineer. And take every man, woman and child off the shift.

First Figure in Yellow. All resisting?

Chief Engineer. We weaken from shift to shift.

First Figure in Yellow. Then what next?

Chief Engineer. Gas!

First Figure in Yellow. Why did you not flog the first that flagged?

Chief Engineer. No.

First Figure in Yellow. Did you doubt its spread, having begun?

Chief Engineer. No.

First Figure in Yellow. Why did you conceal these occurrences?

Chief Engineer. I did so.

First Figure in Yellow. Are you supporting the revolt?

Chief Engineer. With all my power.

Fifth Figure in Yellow [at green pane]. Report from third works: Production . . .

Chief Engineer [triumphantly]. Stopped!

Sixth Figure in Yellow [at green pane]. Report from first works: Production . . .

Chief Engineer. Stopped!

[The FIGURES IN YELLOW leave their tables.]

First Figure in Yellow. Who . . . ?

Chief Engineer. My orders! As I left to come here. With my power behind them, conferred by yourself. The obedient obey. No more hands lifting levers—for others. No more feet pressing switch-pedals—for others. No more eyes watching pressure-gauges—for others. Hand falls, fist clenches against you—foot withdraws, poises to run against you—eyes turn away, dart glances against you. Gas for us—gas against you!

First Figure in Yellow. Do you overlook the consequences?

Chief Engineer. None for us.

First Figure in Yellow. Batteries surround the works.

Chief Engineer. In triple circle.

First Figure in Yellow. Primed for the first sign of rebellion.

Chief Engineer. Rebellion rages!

First Figure in Yellow. The works to the last man, into the dust with one volley.

Chief Engineer. Are you sure?

First Figure in Yellow. We await your report of resumption of work within minimum delay. [He signs to the FIGURES IN YELLOW—they leave together.]

Chief Engineer [at front table—telephones]. Leave all shops—meeting in the hall.

[Crowd entrance—showing accumulation towards centre—full hall.]

Voice [at last—shrill, frightened]. Who has turned us off?

Chief Engineer. Those who fill this place with crowding pressure to the limit of its walls. Those who left lever, switch-block, and gauge-glass in the lurch. Those who were self-silence and will now be freemen-voice.

Voices upon Voices. Who has turned us off?

Chief Engineer. Those whose hands double to fists defying. Those whose feet rush to the attack. Those whose eyes take in the measure of the slave-master.

All the Voices Together. Who has turned us off?

Chief Engineer. Your command is your

destiny. Your word is your law. Yesterday, rented slaves—masters today.

[Silence.]

Voice. What of us?

Chief Engineer. Release from debt and deeper debt. Backs pull straight after burden and yoke. Strangling compulsion relaxed.

Voices upon Voices. What of us?

Chief Engineer. Up from the knees. Weakness grows strong. Fear soars to fight.

All the Voices Together. What of us?

Chief Engineer. Unleash the slinking rage in you. Unleash the hatred that cringed in you. Unleash the poison that oozed in you. Repay!

Voices. Have we power?

Chief Engineer. Pushed from shadow into light. Purple for your rags. Nothingness raised to affluence.

Voices upon Voices. Have we power?

Chief Engineer. Beyond all measure. No weapon can strike with the force of your arms raised to strike. No shot is deadlier than the breath of your lungs. You are on the march, conquerors, before ever you reach the field.

All the Voices Together. Have we power?

Chief Engineer. The battle is yours without the loss of a knuckle-joint. In less than half a day, the day is yours. Where is the means to victory more terrible than yours? Poison Gas! [He takes a red globe out of his pocket.] My discovery for you. Beasts of burden you, and I too—and the shame devoured me for all of us. Not for a second did I lose sight of my goal, to destroy our whip-masters—at last I reached it—the formula that frees: hatred and shame were its ingredients. In a skin-thin glass—victory: that swells and eats away flesh from legs, bleaches stiff bones. [Silence.] There is no looking on the power of annihilation with impunity. Reason leaves, and madness enters the brain of the beholder who sees living men turned to bleached skeletons before his very eyes. Resistance screams itself down out of the mouth of the first inquisitive one who rashly rushes hither, crying out world's end and massacre! [Silence.] This is the decisive hour for time everlasting—decide, and you are the victors. Set the example—hurl your ball from the top of the dome—aim at the lines waiting to aim at you—meet onslaught with onslaught—hurl your balls!

Voices. Poison gas.

Chief Engineer. Be avengers!

Voices upon Voices. Poison gas!
Chief Engineer. Be fighters!
All the Voices Together. Poison gas!
Chief Engineer. Be conquerors!

[*Young workers crowd on to the steps of the platform—hands out-stretched for the globe. BILLIONAIRE WORKER pushes his way through them past their uplifted arms.*]

Billionaire Worker. Don't touch that globe. Reject that temptation. Do not destroy your power with the hurling of the balls.

Voices. The Billionaire Worker!

Billionaire Worker. Do not follow those orders. Do not aim in the dark. Do no mean and paltry trafficking.

Voices upon Voices. The Billionaire Worker!

Billionaire Worker. Protect your privileges. Know your means of conquest. Build upon rock the house that shall stand unshaken forever.

All the Voices Together. The Billionaire Worker!

[*The young workers have fallen away from the steps. The BILLIONAIRE WORKER ascends further.*]

Billionaire Worker. Spread your sight to span the new that began in the old. Beginning meets end, new truth, truth revealed. All ages debouch in your age, endlessly repeating. Your need is not discovery—your fulfillment not experiment and proof. Your lot is in the wheel thousands of years revolving—purifying your decisions with sorting and sorting. [*Silence.*] No road of many turnings leads to perfection as the street that is opening for you now. Yours the gain—your tables ran over. Riches were piled up all round you. [*Silence.*] But it scattered away like sand children play with on the beach. The rising of a wind retards nothing—you cannot stop springs black with the birth of earth-disturbing tempest. Momentum of release met you and flung you to the ground. A deep fall. The tower of your own height buried you. [*Silence.*] You were reckoned great before—you shall be greater now—as martyrs. [*Silence.*] The unslaked passion left you—day-labour. Endlessly satiating the nameless other replaced it. Not tables and shifts and dismissals feed it; but its own coin that pays never more, never less. [*Silence.*] Pay with the counterfeit they demand of you.

Cheat the cheater with his own spurious currency's dull ring. Your work brings nothing to maturity—do it. Their currency is falling—convert it. Martyrs in the works—freemen in yourselves. [*Silence.*] Build up the kingdom. Not with the burden of new discoveries—distance does not intimidate. Hard upon the ungrudging promise crowd the first-fruits—law long and long since, piled on law—preparations ripe, time out of mind—use your existence to which all reverts—build to the last stronghold the kingdom which is in yourselves. [*Silence.* *The BILLIONAIRE WORKER on the platform.*] You shall dare what generations and generations have bred in you. You exiled one of yourselves, and wisely—over green pastures he decoyed you here before me. Not from outside can you protect the greatness within you—you cannot pen it in with colony and colony—your kingdom is not of this world! [*Silence.*] Face the stranger—pay him his interest—leave him his wage—shovel him his gains—suffer his demands—ignore the spine bleeding in your skin—Be your Kingdom! [*Breathing silence.*]

Chief Engineer [*at the foot of the steps.*] Treachery spits in your faces in that cry—do you not hear it? Have you no tongues to downcry it? Have you forgotten the pledge of your surging voices raised to me?

Billionaire Worker. Deliver yourselves within yourselves!

Chief Engineer. What will remain to you once dispossessed? Your necks for the bloody spurring of the lash—yourselves for defilement, laughing you to scorn—a cattle-team misused. And drudgery for ever, a whingin cranking you eternally round and round, wearing and bearing you down. To be racked with chastisement when your limbs break under you. Those are your terms of hire.

Billionaire Worker. Let the kingdom arise, which shall reign in you almighty.

Chief Engineer. Let the power fall low which exploits you now. Yours the gain—without the bending of a finger. Gas the magician works for you. You use your victory as the victors of yesterday showed you to.

Billionaire Worker. Deliver yourselves in the endurance of serfdom which cannot touch the kingdom within.

Chief Engineer. Think of the tribute that will fall to you. No place on the world's globe but will be your debtor, no ships hold but will carry freight for you, no bridge but

whose arch bears supplies for you, no wire but flashes your commands from pole to pole. Your will is world-empire.

Billionaire Worker. The voice speaks again—the light that tempts and dazzles shines out again.

Chief Engineer. Give your purpose voice that it may bind you implacably.

Billionaire Worker. Decide for the way of humility.

Chief Engineer. Strike a bargain with your term and the bombardment!

Billionaire Worker. Return to your places, perform your services—they are the lesser part.

Chief Engineer [on the platform]. Take aim and cast the single throw which gives you victory.

Billionaire Worker. Return!

Chief Engineer [holding the globe high]. Dominion!

Billionaire Worker. Found the kingdom!

Chief Engineer. Ignite the gas that kills! [Silence.]

Billionaire Worker. Be silent and listen how heaven and earth both hold their breath before your decision which shall seal the fate of the world. [Silence.]

Voices. The gas that kills!

Voices upon Voices. The gas that kills!

All the Voices Together. The gas that kills!

Chief Engineer [victorious]. Ours the power! Ours the world! Aim the bomb—hasten the throw—they shall not shoot! . . . Who volunteers?

Young Workers [storming on to the platform]. I!

Chief Engineer. Have a care of this ball—it is dangerous.

Billionaire Worker [restraining the young workers—turning to the CHIEF ENGINEER]. I am the rightful one—I have priority.

All the Voices Together. The Billionaire Worker! [The CHIEF ENGINEER gives him the bomb.]

Billionaire Worker [on the platform—bomb upraised over his head]. My blood's blood beat for our conversion. My thirst slaked itself at the thirst of mother and mother's father. Our voices might have waked the wilderness—Our voices could wake the wilderness—men's ears are deaf. I am vindicated! I can fulfill! [He throws the bomb into the air—it falls and smashes with a frail clatter. Silence.]

Chief Engineer. The gas that kills.

All the Voices. The gas that kills.

[Paralysed silence. Bombardment thunders from without. Darkness, and vast crash of collapsing walls. Silence. Light comes gradually. The hall a shambles of cement slabs lying on top of one another like broken gravestones—the skeletons of the workers already bleached jut out amongst them. FIGURE IN YELLOW—helmeted, telephone at head, hastens towards the wreckage, unrolling wire.]

Figure in Yellow [stops—stares wildly—shrieks into telephone]. Report of effect of bombardment—Turn your bullets on yourselves—exterminate yourselves—the dead crowd out of their graves—day of judgment—dies irae—solvet—in favil. . . .

[His shot shatters the rest. In the mist-grey distance sheaves of flaming bombs bursting together—vivid in self-extinction.]

THE END

R. U. R.

By KAREL CAPEK

Translated from the Czech by PAUL SELVER

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KAREL CAPEK AND HIS PLAYS

KAREL CAPEK, the author of *R. U. R.*, was born in northern Bohemia on January 9 1890, and was educated at the universities of Prague, Berlin, and Paris. He began his career in literature by writing sketches and stories in collaboration with his brother Joseph, and until his death in 1938 continued to produce remarkable short stories and sketches of travel that have placed him among the most gifted of Czecho-Slovakian writers. After a period spent in journalism, he became intensely interested in the theatre, and for a time assisted M. Jaroslav Kvapil in directing the Municipal Theatre of Vinohradz. He confesses that, from the first, he felt an "unappeasable desire of intellectual adventure" and "a passionate need of search". This intellectual adventurousness and passionate curiosity inspired his plays and help to explain their characteristic qualities. His first play, *The Brigand*, was published in 1920. With the production of *R. U. R.* his reputation was established as the foremost dramatist of Czecho-Slovakia. Following *R. U. R.* came *The Life of the Insects*, written in collaboration with his brother Joseph, which was produced in New York under the title of *The World We Live In*. This curious and brilliant social satire was suggested by J. H. Fabre's famous scientific work *Social Life in the Insect World*, and presents human beings in the guise of various kinds of insects, with satire upon human follies and vices. Its third act, at least, must be considered as among the most striking and effective of its kind in all modern drama. Capek's next play, *The Makropoulos Case* (published and produced in America as *The Makropoulos Secret*) is a study of the possible effects of longevity upon an individual whose life has been artificially prolonged to the age of over three hundred years. Expressed, like *R. U. R.*, in terms of melodrama, the play none the less embodies a serious ethical concept, presented with excellent theatrical effect.

It may very well be that *R. U. R.*, with its picture of mechanical men doing the work of the world and then turning upon their creators, was suggested by the old Jewish legend current in Prague—that of the "Golem," a man made by artifice, a kind of Frankenstein's monster without a soul, who turns Berserk and works havoc, until he is finally destroyed by his maker. However inspired or suggested, the play is perhaps the most remarkable example of the union of melodrama and social criticism. In its essence it is a devastating arraignment of modern mechanistic civilization. In mere form, in technique, it is unquestionably melodrama—its persons mere types, its situations, including its superb "curtains", essentially melodramatic. Perhaps in no other play is there so perfect a fusion of two such seemingly diverse qualities; for there can be no question of the timely importance and arresting quality of the idea, and certainly as little question as to the magnificently effective, though purely theatric, quality of the plot.

R. U. R. was produced first at the National Theatre, Prague, on January 26, 1921. Its success was immediate and pronounced, so great indeed that its fame quickly became international, and it was soon produced in Vienna, Berlin, Paris, London, New York, and other capitals. The first production in America was made in New York by the Theatre Guild on October 9, 1922. The play has continued a favorite in the professional theatre and has since been repeatedly produced by the "little theatres" of the United States.

CHARACTERS

HARRY DOMIN—*General Manager of Rossum's Universal Robots.*

SULLA—*A Robotess*

MARIUS—*A Robot*

HELENA GLORY

DR. GALL—*Head of the Physiological and Experimental Department of R. U. R.*

MR. FABRY—*Engineer General, Technical Controller of R. U. R.*

DR. HALLEMEIER—*Head of the Institute for Psychological Training of Robots*

MR. ALQUIST—*Architect, Head of the Works Department of R. U. R.*

CONSUL BUSMAN—*General Business Manager of R. U. R.*

NANA

RADIUS—*A Robot*

HELENA—*A Robotess*

PRIMUS—*A Robot*

A SERVANT

FIRST ROBOT

SECOND ROBOT

THIRD ROBOT

The action takes place on an island some time in the future

R. U. R.

ACT ONE

Central office of the factory of Rossum's Universal Robots. Entrance on the right. The windows on the front wall look out on the rows of factory chimneys. On the left more managing departments. DOMIN is sitting in the revolving chair at a large American writing table. On the left-hand wall large maps showing steamship and railroad routes. On the right-hand wall are fastened printed placards. ("Robot's Cheapest Labor," etc.) In contrast to these wall fittings, the floor is covered with a splendid Turkish carpet, a sofa, leather armchair, and filing cabinets. At a desk near the windows SULLA is typing letters.

Domin [dictating]. Ready?

Sulla. Yes.

Domin. To E. M. McVicker and Co., Southampton, England. "We undertake no guarantee for goods damaged in transit. As soon as the consignment was taken on board we drew your captain's attention to the fact that the vessel was unsuitable for the transport of Robots, and we are therefore not responsible for spoiled freight. We beg to remain for Rossum's Universal Robots. Yours truly." [*SULLA, who has sat motionless during dictation, now types rapidly for a few seconds, then stops, withdrawing the completed letter.*] Ready?

Sulla. Yes.

Domin. Another letter. To the E. B. Huyson Agency, New York, U.S.A. "We beg to acknowledge receipt of order for five thousand Robots. As you are sending your own vessel, please dispatch as cargo equal quantities of soft and hard coal for R. U. R., the same to be credited as part payment of the amount due to us. We beg to remain, for Rossum's Universal Robots. Yours truly." [*SULLA repeats the rapid typing.*] Ready?

Sulla. Yes.

Domin. Another letter. "Friedrichs-works, Hamburg, Germany. We beg to acknowledge receipt of order for fifteen thou-

sand Robots." [*Telephone rings.*] Hello! This is the Central Office. Yes. Certainly. Well, send them a wire. Good. [*Hangs up telephone.*] Where did I leave off?

Sulla. "We beg to acknowledge receipt of order for fifteen thousand Robots."

Domin. Fifteen thousand R. Fifteen thousand R. [*Enter MARIUS.*]

Domin. Well, what is it?

Marius. There's a lady, sir, asking to see you.

Domin. A lady? Who is she?

Marius. I don't know, sir. She brings this card of introduction.

Domin. [*Reads the card.*] Ah, from President Glory. Ask her to come in.

Marius. Please step this way.

[*Enter HELENA GLORY.*]

[*Exit MARIUS.*]

Helena. How do you do?

Domin. How do you do. [*Standing up.*] What can I do for you?

Helena. You are Mr. Domin, the General Manager.

Domin. I am.

Helena. I have come —

Domin. With President Glory's card. That is quite sufficient.

Helena. President Glory is my father. I am Helena Glory.

Domin. Miss Glory, this is such a great honor for us to be allowed to welcome our great President's daughter, that —

Helena. That you can't show me the door?

Domin. Please sit down. Sulla, you may go.

[*Exit SULLA.*]

Domin. [*Sitting down.*] How can I be of service to you, Miss Glory?

Helena. I have come —

Domin. To have a look at our famous works where people are manufactured. Like all visitors. Well, there is no objection.

Helena. I thought it was forbidden to —

Domin. To enter the factory. Yes, of course. Everybody comes here with someone's visiting card, Miss Glory.

Helena. And you show them —

Domin. Only certain things. The manufacture of artificial people is a secret process.

Helena. If you only knew how enormously that —

Domin. Interests me. Europe's talking about nothing else.

Helena. Why don't you let me finish speaking?

Domin. I beg your pardon. Did you want to say something different?

Helena. I only wanted to ask —

Domin. Whether I could make a special exception in your case and show you our factory. Why, certainly, Miss Glory.

Helena. How do you know I wanted to say that?

Domin. They all do. But we shall consider it a special honor to show you more than we do the rest.

Helena. Thank you.

Domin. But you must agree not to divulge the least . . .

Helena [*standing up and giving him her hand*]. My word of honor.

Domin. Thank you. Won't you raise your veil?

Helena. Of course. You want to see whether I'm a spy or not. I beg your pardon.

Domin. What is it?

Helena. Would you mind releasing my hand?

Domin [*releasing it*]. I beg your pardon.

Helena [*raising her veil*]. How cautious you have to be here, don't you?

Domin. [*observing her with deep interest*]. Hm, of course—we—that is —

Helena. But what is it? What's the matter?

Domin. I'm remarkably pleased. Did you have a pleasant crossing?

Helena. Yes.

Domin. No difficulty?

Helena. Why?

Domin. What I mean to say is—you're so young.

Helena. May we go straight into the factory?

Domin. Yes. Twenty-two, I think.

Helena. Twenty-two what?

Domin. Years.

Helena. Twenty-one. Why do you want to know?

Domin. Because—as—[*with enthusiasm*] you will make a long stay, won't you?

Helena. That depends on how much of the factory you show me.

Domin. Oh, hang the factory. Oh, no, no, you shall see everything, Miss Glory. Indeed you shall. Won't you sit down?

Helena [*crossing to couch and sitting*]. Thank you.

Domin. But first would you like to hear the story of the invention?

Helena. Yes, indeed.

Domin [*observes HELENA with rapture and reels off rapidly*]:

It was in the year 1920 that old Rossum, the great physiologist, who was then quite a young scientist, took himself to this distant island for the purpose of studying the ocean fauna, full stop. On this occasion he attempted by chemical synthesis to imitate the living matter known as protoplasm until he suddenly discovered a substance which behaved exactly like living matter although its chemical composition was different. That was in the year of 1932, exactly four hundred years after the discovery of America. Whew!

Helena. Do you know that by heart?

Domin. Yes. You see physiology is not in my line. Shall I go on?

Helena. Yes, please.

Domin. And then, Miss Glory, old Rossum wrote the following among his chemical specimens: "Nature has found only one method of organizing living matter. There is, however, another method, more simple, flexible and rapid, which has not yet occurred to nature at all. This second process by which life can be developed was discovered by me to-day." Now imagine him, Miss Glory, writing those wonderful words over some colloidal mess that a dog wouldn't look at. Imagine him sitting over a test tube, and thinking how the whole tree of life would grow from it, how all animals would proceed from it, beginning with some sort of beetle and ending with a man. A man of different substance from us. Miss Glory, that was a tremendous moment.

Helena. Well?

Domin. Now, the thing was how to get the life out of the test tubes, and hasten development and form organs, bones and nerves, and so on, and find such substances

as catalytics, enzymes, hormones, and so forth, in short—you understand?

Helena. Not much, I'm afraid.

Domin. Never mind. You see with the help of his tinctures he could make whatever he wanted. He could have produced a Medusa with the brain of a Socrates or a worm fifty yards long. But being without a grain of humor, he took it into his head to make a vertebrate or perhaps a man. This artificial living matter of his had a raging thirst for life. It didn't mind being sewn or mixed together. That couldn't be done with natural albumen. And that's how he set about it.

Helena. About what?

Domin. About imitating nature. First of all he tried making an artificial dog. That took him several years and resulted in a sort of stunted calf which died in a few days. I'll show it to you in the museum. And then old Rossum started on the manufacture of man.

Helena. And I must divulge this to nobody?

Domin. To nobody in the world.

Helena. What a pity that it's to be found in all the school books of both Europe and America.

Domin. Yes. But do you know what isn't in the school books? That old Rossum was mad. Seriously, Miss Glory, you must keep this to yourself. The old crank wanted to actually make people.

Helena. But you do make people.

Domin. Approximately, Miss Glory. But old Rossum meant it literally. He wanted to become a sort of scientific substitute for God. He was a fearful materialist, and that's why he did it all. His sole purpose was nothing more nor less than to prove that God was no longer necessary. Do you know anything about anatomy?

Helena. Very little.

Domin. Neither do I. Well, he then decided to manufacture everything as in the human body. I'll show you in the museum the bungling attempt it took him ten years to produce. It was to have been a man, but it lived for three days only. Then up came young Rossum, an engineer. He was a wonderful fellow, Miss Glory. When he saw what a mess of it the old man was making, he said: "It's absurd to spend ten years making a man. If you can't make

him quicker than nature, you might as well shut up shop." Then he set about learning anatomy himself.

Helena. There's nothing about that in the school books.

Domin. No. The school books are full of paid advertisements, and rubbish at that. What the school books say about the united efforts of the two great Rossums is all a fairy tale. They used to have dreadful rows. The old atheist hadn't the slightest conception of industrial matters, and the end of it was that young Rossum shut him up in some laboratory or other and let him fritter the time away with his monstrosities, while he himself started on the business from an engineer's point of view. Old Rossum cursed him and before he died he managed to blotch up two physiological horrors. Then one day they found him dead in the laboratory. And that's his whole story.

Helena. And what about the young man?

Domin. Well, any one who has looked into human anatomy will have seen at once that man is too complicated, and that a good engineer could make him more simply. So young Rossum began to overhaul anatomy and tried to see what could be left out or simplified. In short—but this isn't boring you, Miss Glory?

Helena. No indeed. You're—it's awfully interesting.

Domin. So young Rossum said to himself: "A man is something that feels happy, plays the piano, likes going for a walk, and in fact, wants to do a whole lot of things that are really unnecessary."

Helena. Oh.

Domin. That are unnecessary when he wants, let us say, to weave or count. Do you play the piano?

Helena. Yes.

Domin. That's good. But a working machine must not play the piano, must not feel happy, must not do a whole lot of other things. A gasoline motor must not have tassels or ornaments, Miss Glory. And to manufacture artificial workers is the same thing as to manufacture gasoline motors. The process must be of the simplest, and the product of the best from a practical point of view. What sort of worker do you think is the best from a practical point of view?

Helena. What?

Domin. What sort of worker do you think is the best from a practical point of view?

Helena. Perhaps the one who is most honest and hardworking.

Domin. No; the one that is the cheapest. The one whose requirements are the smallest. Young Rossum invented a worker with the minimum amount of requirements. He had to simplify him. He rejected everything that did not contribute directly to the progress of work—everything that makes man more expensive. In fact, he rejected man and made the Robot. My dear Miss Glory, the Robots are not people. Mechanically they are more perfect than we are, they have an enormously developed intelligence, but they have no soul.

Helena. How do you know they've no soul?

Domin. Have you ever seen what a Robot looks like inside?

Helena. No.

Domin. Very neat, very simple. Really, a beautiful piece of work. Not much in it, but everything in flawless order. The product of an engineer is technically at a higher pitch of perfection than a product of nature.

Helena. But man is supposed to be the product of God.

Domin. All the worse. God hasn't the least notion of modern engineering. Would you believe that young Rossum then proceeded to play at being God?

Helena. How do you mean?

Domin. He began to manufacture Super-Robots. Regular giants they were. He tried to make them twelve feet tall. But you wouldn't believe what a failure they were.

Helena. A failure?

Domin. Yes. For no reason at all their limbs used to keep snapping off. Evidently our planet is too small for giants. Now we only make Robots of normal size and of very high class human finish.

Helena. I saw the first Robots at home. The town counsel bought them for—I mean engaged them for work.

Domin. Bought them, dear Miss Glory. Robots are bought and sold.

Helena. These were employed as street

sweepers. I saw them sweeping. They were so strange and quiet.

Domin. Rossum's Universal Robot factory doesn't produce a uniform brand of Robots. We have Robots of finer and coarser grades. The best will live about twenty years. [*He rings for MARIUS.*]

Helena. Then they die?

Domin. Yes, they get used up.

[*Enter MARIUS.*]

Domin. Marius, bring in samples of the Manual Labor Robot. [*Exit MARIUS.*]

Domin. I'll show you specimens of the two extremes. This first grade is comparatively inexpensive and is made in vast quantities.

[*MARIUS reenters with two Manual Labor Robots.*]

Domin. There you are; as powerful as a small tractor. Guaranteed to have average intelligence. That will do, Marius.

[*MARIUS exits with Robots.*]

Helena. They make me feel so strange.

Domin [*rings*]. Did you see my new typist? [*He rings for SULLA.*]

Helena. I didn't notice her.

[*Enter SULLA.*]

Domin. Sullla, let Miss Glory see you.

Helena. So pleased to meet you. You must find it terribly dull in this out-of-the-way spot, don't you?

Sulla. I don't know, Miss Glory.

Helena. Where do you come from?

Sulla. From the factory.

Helena. Oh, you were born there?

Sulla. I was made there.

Helena. What?

Domin [*laughing*]. Sullla is a Robot, best grade.

Helena. Oh, I beg your pardon.

Domin. Sullla isn't angry. See, Miss Glory, the kind of skin we make. [*Feels the skin on SULLA's face.*] Feel her face.

Helena. Oh, no, no.

Domin. You wouldn't know that she's made of different material from us, would you? Turn round, Sullla.

Helena. Oh, stop, stop.

Domin. Talk to Miss Glory, Sullla.

Sulla. Please sit down. [*HELENA sits.*] Did you have a pleasant crossing?

Helena. Oh, yes, certainly.

Sulla. Don't go back on the *Amelia*, Miss Glory. The barometer is falling steadily

Wait for the *Pennsylvania*. That's a good, powerful vessel.

Domin. What's its speed?

Sulla. Twenty knots. Fifty thousand tons. One of the latest vessels, Miss Glory.

Helena. Thank you.

Sulla. A crew of fifteen hundred, Captain Harpy, eight boilers —

Domin. That'll do, Sulla. Now show us your knowledge of French.

Helena. You know French?

Sulla. I know four languages. I can write: Dear Sir, Monsieur, Geehrter Herr, Cteny pane.

Helena [*jumping up*]. Oh, that's absurd! Sulla isn't a Robot. Sulla is a girl like me. Sulla, this is outrageous! Why do you take part in such a hoax?

Sulla. I am a Robot.

Helena. No, no, you are not telling the truth. I know they've forced you to do it for an advertisement. Sulla, you are a girl like me, aren't you?

Domin. I'm sorry, Miss Glory. Sulla is a Robot.

Helena. It's a lie!

Domin. What? [*Rings.*] Excuse me, Miss Glory, then I must convince you.

[*Enter MARIUS.*]

Domin. Marius, take Sulla into the dissecting room, and tell them to open her up at once.

Helena. Where?

Domin. Into the dissecting room. When they've cut her open, you can go and have a look.

Helena. No, no!

Domin. Excuse me, you spoke of lies.

Helena. You wouldn't have her killed?

Domin. You can't kill machines.

Helena. Don't be afraid, Sulla, I won't let you go. Tell me, my dear, are they always so cruel to you? You mustn't put up with it, Sulla. You mustn't.

Sulla. I am a Robot.

Helena. That doesn't matter. Robots are just as good as we are. Sulla, you wouldn't let yourself be cut to pieces?

Sulla. Yes.

Helena. Oh, you're not afraid of death, then?

Sulla. I cannot tell, Miss Glory.

Helena. Do you know what would happen to you in there?

Sulla. Yes, I should cease to move.

Helena. How dreadful!

Domin. Marius, tell Miss Glory what you are.

Marius. Marius, the Robot.

Domin. Would you take Sulla into the dissecting room?

Marius. Yes.

Domin. Would you be sorry for her?

Marius. I cannot tell.

Domin. What would happen to her?

Marius. She would cease to move. They would put her into the stamping mill.

Domin. That is death, Marius. Aren't you afraid of death?

Marius. No.

Domin. You see, Miss Glory, the Robots have no interest in life. They have no enjoyments. They are less than so much grass.

Helena. Oh, stop. Send them away.

Domin. Marius, Sulla, you may go.

[*Exeunt SULLA and MARIUS.*]

Helena. How terrible! It's outrageous what you are doing.

Domin. Why outrageous?

Helena. I don't know, but it is. Why do you call her Sulla?

Domin. Isn't it a nice name?

Helena. It's a man's name. Sulla was a Roman general.

Domin. Oh, we thought that Marius and Sulla were lovers.

Helena. Marius and Sulla were generals and fought against each other in the year—I've forgotten now.

Domin. Come here to the window.

Helena. What?

Domin. Come here. What do you see?

Helena. Bricklayers.

Domin. Robots. All our work people are Robots. And down there, can you see anything?

Helena. Some sort of office.

Domin. A counting house. And in it —

Helena. A lot of officials.

Domin. Robots. All our officials are Robots. And when you see the factory —

[*Factory whistle blows.*]

Domin. Noon. We have to blow the whistle because the Robots don't know when to stop work. In two hours I will show you the kneading trough.

Helena. Kneading trough?

Domin. The pestle for beating up the paste. In each one we mix the ingredients

for a thousand Robots at one operation. Then there are the vats for the preparation of liver, brains, and so on. Then you will see the bone factory. After that I'll show you the spinning mill.

Helena. Spinning mill?

Domin. Yes. For weaving nerves and veins. Miles and miles of digestive tubes pass through it at a time.

Helena. Mayn't we talk about something else?

Domin. Perhaps it would be better. There's only a handful of us among a hundred thousand Robots, and not one woman. We talk about nothing but the factory all day, every day. It's just as if we were under a curse, Miss Glory.

Helena. I'm sorry I said that you were lying. [A knock at the door.]

Domin. Come in.

[From the right enter MR. FABRY, DR. GALL, DR. HALLEMEIER, MR. ALQUIST.]

Dr. Gall. I beg your pardon, I hope we don't intrude.

Domin. Come in. Miss Glory, here are Alquist, Fabry, Gall, Hallemeier. This is President Glory's daughter.

Helena. How do you do.

Fabry. We had no idea —

Dr. Gall. Highly honored, I'm sure —

Alquist. Welcome, Miss Glory.

[BUSMAN rushes in from the right.]

Busman. Hello, what's up?

Domin. Come in, Busman. This is Busman, Miss Glory. This is President Glory's daughter.

Busman. By jove, that's fine! Miss Glory, may we send a cablegram to the papers about your arrival?

Helena. No, no, please don't.

Domin. Sit down, please, Miss Glory.

Busman. Allow me —

[Dragging up armchairs.]

Dr. Gall. Please —

Fabry. Excuse me —

Alquist. What sort of a crossing did you have?

Dr. Gall. Are you going to stay long?

Fabry. What do you think of the factory, Miss Glory?

Hallemeier. Did you come over on the *Amelia*?

Domin. Be quiet and let Miss Glory speak.

Helena [to DOMIN]. What am I to speak to them about?

Domin. Anything you like.

Helena. Shall . . . may I speak quite frankly?

Domin. Why, of course.

Helena [waving, then in desperate resolution]. Tell me, doesn't it ever distress you the way you are treated?

Fabry. By whom, may I ask?

Helena. Why, everybody.

Alquist. Treated?

Dr. Gall. What makes you think —?

Helena. Don't you feel that you might be living a better life?

Dr. Gall. Well, that depends on what you mean, Miss Glory.

Helena. I mean that it's perfectly outrageous. It's terrible. [Standing up.] The whole of Europe is talking about the way you're being treated. That's why I came here, to see for myself, and it's a thousand times worse than could have been imagined. How can you put up with it?

Alquist. Put up with what?

Helena. Good heavens, you are living creatures, just like us, like the whole of Europe, like the whole world. It's disgraceful that you must live like this.

Busman. Good gracious, Miss Glory.

Fabry. Well, she's not far wrong. We live here just like red Indians.

Helena. Worse than red Indians. May I, oh, may I call you brothers?

Busman. Why not?

Helena. Brothers, I have not come here as the President's daughter. I have come on behalf of the Humanity League. Brothers, the Humanity League now has over two hundred thousand members. Two hundred thousand people are on your side, and offer you their help.

Busman. Two hundred thousand people! Miss Glory, that's a tidy lot. Not bad.

Fabry. I'm always telling you there's nothing like good old Europe. You see, they've not forgotten us. They're offering us help.

Dr. Gall. What help? A theatre, for instance?

Hallemeier. An orchestra?

Helena. More than that.

Alquist. Just you?

Helena. Oh, never mind about me. I'll stay as long as it is necessary.

Busman. By jove, that's good.

Alquist. Domin, I'm going to get the best room ready for Miss Glory.

Domin. Just a minute. I'm afraid that Miss Glory is of the opinion that she has been talking to Robots.

Helena. Of course.

Domin. I'm sorry. These gentlemen are human beings just like us.

Helena. You're not Robots?

Busman. Not Robots.

Hallemeier. Robots indeed!

Dr. Gall. No, thanks.

Fabry. Upon my honor, Miss Glory, we aren't Robots.

Helena [to *Domin*]. Then why did you tell me that all your officials are Robots?

Domin. Yes, the officials, but not the managers. Allow me, Miss Glory: this is Mr. Fabry, General Technical Manager of R. U. R.; Dr. Gall, Head of the Psychological and Experimental Department; Dr. Hallemeier, Head of the Institute for the Psychological Training of Robots; Consul Busman, General Business Manager; and Alquist, Head of the Building Department of R. U. R.

Alquist. Just a builder.

Helena. Excuse me, gentlemen, for— for— Have I done something dreadful?

Alquist. Not at all, Miss Glory. Please sit down.

Helena. I'm a stupid girl. Send me back by the first ship.

Dr. Gall. Not for anything in the world, Miss Glory. Why should we send you back?

Helena. Because you know I've come to disturb your Robots for you.

Domin. My dear Miss Glory, we've had close upon a hundred saviours and prophets here. Every ship brings us some. Missionaries, anarchists, Salvation Army, all sorts. It's astonishing what a number of churches and idiots there are in the world.

Helena. And you let them speak to the Robots?

Domin. So far we've let them all; why not? The Robots remember everything, but that's all. They don't even laugh at what the people say. Really, it is quite incredible. If it would amuse you, Miss

Glory, I'll take you over to the Robot warehouse. It holds about three hundred thousand of them.

Busman. Three hundred and forty-seven thousand.

Domin. Good! And you can say whatever you like to them. You can read the Bible, recite the multiplication table, whatever you please. You can even preach to them about human rights.

Helena. Oh, I think that if you were to show them a little love—

Fabry. Impossible, Miss Glory. Nothing is harder to like than a Robot.

Helena. What do you make them for, then?

Busman. Ha, ha, ha, that's good! What are Robots made for?

Fabry. For work, Miss Glory! One Robot can replace two and a half workmen. The human machine, Miss Glory, was terribly imperfect. It had to be removed sooner or later.

Busman. It was too expensive.

Fabry. It was not effective. It no longer answers the requirements of modern engineering. Nature has no idea of keeping pace with modern labor. For example: from a technical point of view, the whole of childhood is a sheer absurdity. So much time lost. And then again—

Helena. Oh, no! No!

Fabry. Pardon me. But kindly tell me what is the real aim of your League—the . . . the Humanity League.

Helena. Its real purpose is to—to protect the Robots—and—and ensure good treatment for them.

Fabry. Not a bad object, either. A machine has to be treated properly. Upon my soul, I approve of that. I don't like damaged articles. Please, Miss Glory, enroll us all as contributing, or regular, or foundation members of your League.

Helena. No, you don't understand me. What we really want is to—to liberate the Robots.

Hallemeier. How do you propose to do that?

Helena. They are to be—to be dealt with like human beings.

Hallemeier. Aha. I suppose they're to vote? To drink beer? to order us about?

Helena. Why shouldn't they drink beer?

Hallemeier. Perhaps they're even to receive wages?

Helena. Of course they are.

Hallemeier. Fancy that, now! And what would they do with their wages, pray?

Helena. They would buy—what they need . . . what pleases them.

Hallemeier. That would be very nice, Miss Glory, only there's nothing that does please the Robots. Good heavens, what are they to buy? You can feed them on pineapples, straw, whatever you like. It's all the same to them, they've no appetite at all. They've no interest in anything, Miss Glory. Why, hang it all, nobody's ever yet seen a Robot smile.

Helena. Why . . . why don't you make them happier?

Hallemeier. That wouldn't do, Miss Glory. They are only workmen.

Helena. Oh, but they're so intelligent.

Hallemeier. Confoundedly so, but they're nothing else. They've no will of their own. No passion. No soul.

Helena. No love?

Hallemeier. Love? Rather not. Robots don't love. Not even themselves.

Helena. Nor defiance?

Hallemeier. Defiance? I don't know. Only rarely, from time to time.

Helena. What?

Hallemeier. Nothing particular. Occasionally they seem to go off their heads. Something like epilepsy, you know. It's called Robot's cramp. They'll suddenly sling down everything they're holding, stand still, gnash their teeth—and then they have to go into the stamping-mill. It's evidently some breakdown in the mechanism.

Domin. A flaw in the works that has to be removed.

Helena. No, no, that's the soul.

Fabry. Do you think that the soul first shows itself by a gnashing of teeth?

Helena. Perhaps it's a sort of revolt. Perhaps it's just a sign that there's a struggle within. Oh, if you could infuse them with it!

Domin. That'll be remedied, Miss Glory. Dr. Gall is just making some experiments—

Dr. Gall. Not with regard to that, Domin. At present I am making pain-nerves.

Helena. Pain-nerves?

Dr. Gall. Yes, the Robots feel practically no bodily pain. You see, young Rossum provided them with too limited a nervous system. We must introduce suffering.

Helena. Why do you want to cause them pain?

Dr. Gall. For industrial reasons, Miss Glory. Sometimes a Robot does damage to himself because it doesn't hurt him. He puts his hand into the machine, breaks his finger, smashes his head, it's all the same to him. We must provide them with pain. That's an automatic protection against damage.

Helena. Will they be happier when they feel pain?

Dr. Gall. On the contrary; but they will be more perfect from a technical point of view.

Helena. Why don't you create a soul for them?

Dr. Gall. That's not in our power.

Fabry. That's not in our interest.

Busman. That would increase the cost of production. Hang it all, my dear young lady, we turn them out at such a cheap rate. A hundred and fifty dollars each fully dressed, and fifteen years ago they cost ten thousand. Five years ago we used to buy the clothes for them. To-day we have our own weaving mill, and now we even export cloth five times cheaper than other factories. What do you pay a yard for cloth, Miss Glory?

Helena. I don't know really, I've forgotten.

Busman. Good gracious, and you want to found a Humanity League? It only costs a third now, Miss Glory. All prices are to-day a third of what they were and they'll fall still lower, lower, lower, like that.

Helena. I don't understand.

Busman. Why, bless you, Miss Glory, it means that the cost of labor has fallen. A Robot, food and all, costs three quarters of a cent per hour. That's mighty important, you know. All factories will go pop like chestnuts if they don't at once buy Robots to lower the cost of production.

Helena. And get rid of their workmen?

Busman. Of course. But in the meantime, we've dumped five hundred thousand

tropical Robots down on the Argentine pampas to grow corn. Would you mind telling me how much you pay a pound for bread?

Helena. I've no idea.

Busman. Well, I'll tell you. It now costs two cents in good old Europe. A pound of bread for two cents, and the Humanity League knows nothing about it. Miss Glory, you don't realize that even that's too expensive. Why, in five years' time I'll wager —

Helena. What?

Busman. That the cost of everything won't be a tenth of what it is now. Why, in five years we'll be up to our ears in corn and everything else.

Alquist. Yes, and all the workers throughout the world will be unemployed.

Domin. Yes, Alquist, they will. Yes, Miss Glory, they will. But in ten years Rossum's Universal Robots will produce so much corn, so much cloth, so much everything, that things will be practically without price. There will be no poverty. All work will be done by living machines. Everybody will be free from worry and liberated from the degradation of labor. Everybody will live only to perfect himself.

Helena. Will he?

Domin. Of course. It's bound to happen. But then the servitude of man to man and the enslavement of man to matter will cease. Of course, terrible things may happen at first, but that simply can't be avoided. Nobody will get bread at the price of life and hatred. The Robots will wash the feet of the beggar and prepare a bed for him in his house.

Alquist. Domin, Domin. What you say sounds too much like Paradise. There was something good in service and something great in humility. There was some kind of virtue in toil and weariness.

Domin. Perhaps. But we cannot reckon with what is lost when we start out to transform the world. Man shall be free and supreme; he shall have no other aim, no other labor, no other care than to perfect himself. He shall serve neither matter nor man. He will not be a machine and a device for production. He will be Lord of creation.

Busman. Amen.

Fabry. So be it.

Helena. You have bewildered me—I should like—I should like to believe this.

Dr. Gall. You are younger than we are, Miss Glory. You will live to see it.

Hallemeier. True. Don't you think Miss Glory might lunch with us?

Dr. Gall. Of course. Domin, ask or behalf of us all.

Domin. Miss Glory, will you do us the honor?

Helena. When you know why I've come —

Fabry. For the League of Humanity, Miss Glory.

Helena. Oh, in that case, perhaps —

Fabry. That's fine! Miss Glory, excuse me for five minutes.

Dr. Gall. Pardon me, too, dear Miss Glory.

Busman. I won't be long.

Hallemeier. We're all very glad you've come.

Busman. We'll be back in exactly five minutes.

[All rush out except DOMIN and HELENA.]

Helena. What have they all gone off for?

Domin. To cook, Miss Glory.

Helena. To cook what?

Domin. Lunch. The Robots do our cooking for us, and as they've no taste it's not altogether — Hallemeier is awfully good at grills and Gall can make a kind of sauce, and Busman knows all about omelettes.

Helena. What a feast! And what's the specialty of Mr. — your builder?

Domin. Alquist? Nothing. He only lays the table. And Fabry will get together a little fruit. Our cuisine is very modest, Miss Glory.

Helena. I wanted to ask you something —

Domin. And I wanted to ask you something, too [looking at watch]. Five minutes.

Helena. What did you want to ask me?

Domin. Excuse me, you asked first.

Helena. Perhaps it's silly of me, but why do you manufacture female Robots when—when —

Domin. When sex means nothing to them?

Helena. Yes.

Domin. There's a certain demand for them, you see. Servants, saleswomen, stenographers. People are used to it.

Helena. But—but, tell me, are the Robots male and female mutually—completely without—

Domin. Completely indifferent to each other, Miss Glory. There's no sign of any affection between them.

Helena. Oh, that's terrible.

Domin. Why?

Helena. It's so unnatural. One doesn't know whether to be disgusted or to hate them, or perhaps—

Domin. To pity them?

Helena. That's more like it. What did you want to ask me about?

Domin. I should like to ask you, Miss Helena, whether you will marry me?

Helena. What?

Domin. Will you be my wife?

Helena. No! The idea!

Domin [looking at his watch]. Another three minutes. If you won't marry me you'll have to marry one of the other five.

Helena. But why should I?

Domin. Because they're all going to ask you in turn.

Helena. How could they dare do such a thing?

Domin. I'm very sorry, Miss Glory. It seems they've all fallen in love with you.

Helena. Please don't let them. I'll—I'll go away at once.

Domin. Helena, you wouldn't be so cruel as to refuse us.

Helena. But, but—I can't marry all six.

Domin. No, but one anyhow. If you don't want me, marry Fabry.

Helena. I won't.

Domin. Dr. Gall.

Helena. I don't want any of you.

Domin [again looking at his watch]. Another two minutes.

Helena. I think you'd marry any woman who came here.

Domin. Plenty of them have come, Helena.

Helena. Young?

Domin. Yes.

Helena. Why didn't you marry one of them?

Domin. Because I didn't lose my head Until to-day. Then, as soon as you lifted your veil—

[HELENA turns her head away.]

Domin. Another minute.

Helena. But I don't want you, I tell you.

Domin [laying both hands on her shoulders]. One more minute! Now you either have to look me straight in the eye and say "No," violently, and then I'll leave you alone—or—

[HELENA looks at him.]

Helena [turning away]. You're mad!

Domin. A man has to be a bit mad, Helena. That's the best thing about him.

Helena. You are—you are—

Domin. Well?

Helena. Don't, you're hurting me.

Domin. The last chance, Helena. Now, or never—

Helena. But—but, Harry— [He embraces and kisses her.] [Knocking at the door.]

Domin [releasing her]. Come in.

[Enter BUSMAN, DR. GALL, and

HALLEMEIER in kitchen aprons
FABRY with a bouquet and AL-
QUIST with a napkin over his
arm.]

Domin. Have you finished your job?

Busman. Yes.

Domin. So have we.

[For a moment the men stand non-plussed; but as soon as they realize what DOMIN means they rush forward, congratulating HELENA and DOMIN as the curtain falls.]

ACT TWO

SCENE: HELENA'S drawing room. On the left a baize door, and a door to the music room, on the right a door to HELENA'S bedroom. In the centre are two windows looking out on the sea and the harbor. A table with odds and ends, a sofa and chairs, a writing table with an electric lamp, on the right a fireplace. On a small table back of the sofa, a small reading lamp. The whole drawing room in all its details is of a modern and purely feminine character. Ten years have elapsed since Act One.

[DOMIN, FABRY, HALLEMEIER, enter on

tip-toe from the left, each carrying a potted plant.]

Hallemeier [*putting down his flower and indicating the door to right*]. Still asleep? Well, as long as she's asleep she can't worry about it.

Domin. She knows nothing about it.

Fabry [*putting plant on writing desk*]. I certainly hope nothing happens to-day.

Hallemeier. For goodness' sake drop it all. Look, Harry, this is a fine cyclamen, isn't it? A new sort, my latest—Cyclamen Helena.

Domin [*looking out of the window*]. No signs of the ship. Things must be pretty bad.

Hallemeier. Be quiet. Suppose she heard you.

Domin. Well, anyway, the *Ultimus* arrived just in time.

Fabry. You really think that to-day —?

Domin. I don't know. Aren't the flowers fine?

Hallemeier. These are my new prim-roses. And this is my new jasmine. I've discovered a wonderful way of developing flowers quickly. Splendid varieties, too. Next year I'll be developing marvelous ones.

Domin. What . . . next year?

Fabry. I'd give a good deal to know what's happening at Havre with —

Domin. Keep quiet.

Helena [*calling from right*]. Nana!

Domin. She's awake. Out you go.

[All go out on tiptoe through upper left door.]

[Enter NANA from lower left door.]

Nana. Horrid mess! Pack of heathens. If I had my say I'd —

Helena [*backwards in the doorway*]. Nana, come and do up my dress.

Nana. I'm coming. So you're up at last. [*Fastening HELENA'S dress.*] My gracious, what brutes!

Helena. Who?

Nana. If you want to turn around, then turn around, but I shan't fasten you up.

Helena. What are you grumbling about now?

Nana. These dreadful creatures, these neathen —

Helena. The Robots?

Nana. I wouldn't even call them by name.

Helena. What's happened?

Nana. Another of them here⁸ has caught it. He began to smash up the statues and pictures in the drawing room, gnashed his teeth, foamed at the mouth—quite mad. Worse than an animal.

Helena. Which of them caught it?

Nana. The one—well, he hasn't got any Christian name. The one in charge of the library.

Helena. Radius?

Nana. That's him. My goodness, I'm scared of them. A spider doesn't scare me as much as them.

Helena. But, Nana, I'm surprised you're not sorry for them.

Nana. Why, you're scared of them, too! You know you are. Why else did you bring me here?

Helena. I'm not scared, really I'm not, Nana. I'm only sorry for them.

Nana. You're scared. Nobody could help being scared. Why, the dog's scared of them: he won't take a scrap of meat out of their hands. He draws in his tail and howls when he knows they're about.

Helena. The dog has no sense.

Nana. He's better than them, and he knows it. Even the horse shies when he meets them. They don't have any young, and a dog has young, every one has young —

Helena. Please fasten up my dress, Nana.

Nana. I say it's against God's will to —

Helena. What is it that smells so nice?

Nana. Flowers.

Helena. What for?

Nana. Now you can turn around.

Helena. Oh, aren't they lovely. Look, Nana. What's happening to-day?

Nana. It ought to be the end of the world. [*Enter DOMIN.*]

Helena. Oh, hello, Harry. Harry, why all these flowers?

Domin. Guess.

Helena. Well, it's not my birthday!

Domin. Better than that.

Helena. I don't know. Tell me.

Domin. It's ten years ago to-day since you came here.

Helena. Ten years? To-day— Why —
[*They embrace.*]

Nana. I'm off.

[*Exits lower door, left.*]

Helena. Fancy you remembering!

Domin. I'm really ashamed, Helena. I didn't.

Helena. But you —

Domin. They remembered.

Helena. Who?

Domin. Busman, Hallemeier, all of them. Put your hand in my pocket.

Helena. Pearls! A necklace. Harry, is that for me?

Domin. It's from Busman.

Helena. But we can't accept it, can we?

Domin. Oh, yes, we can. Put your hand in the other pocket.

Helena [*takes a revolver out of his pocket*]. What's that?

Domin. Sorry. Not that. Try again.

Helena. Oh, Harry, what do you carry a revolver for?

Domin. It got there by mistake.

Helena. You never used to carry one.

Domin. No, you're right. There, that's the pocket.

Helena. A cameo. Why, it's a Greek cameo!

Domin. Apparently. Anyhow, Fabry says it is.

Helena. Fabry? Did Mr. Fabry give me that?

Domin. Of course. [*Opens the door at the left.*] And look in here. Helena, come and see this.

Helena. Oh, isn't it fine! Is this from you?

Domin. No, from Alquist. And there's another on the piano.

Helena. This must be from you.

Domin. There's a card on it.

Helena. From Dr. Gall. [*Reappearing in the doorway.*] Oh, Harry, I feel embarrassed at so much kindness.

Domin. Come here. This is what Hallemeier brought you.

Helena. These beautiful flowers?

Domin. Yes. It's a new kind. Cyclamen Helena. He grew them in honor of you. They are almost as beautiful as you.

Helena. Harry, why do they all —

Domin. They're awfully fond of you. I'm afraid that my present is a little — Look out of the window.

Helena. Where?

Domin. Into the harbor.

Helena. There's a new ship.

Domin. That's your ship.

Helena. Mine? How do you mean?

Domin. For you to take trips in—for your amusement.

Helena. Harry, that's a gunboat.

Domin. A gunboat? What are you thinking of? It's only a little bigger and more solid than most ships.

Helena. Yes, but with guns.

Domin. Oh, yes, with a few guns. You'll travel like a queen, Helena.

Helena. What's the meaning of it? Has anything happened?

Domin. Good heavens, no. I say, try these pearls.

Helena. Harry, have you had bad news?

Domin. On the contrary, no letters have arrived for a whole week.

Helena. Nor telegrams?

Domin. Nor telegrams.

Helena. What does that mean?

Domin. Holidays for us. We all sit in the office with our feet on the table and take a nap. No letters, no telegrams. Oh, glorious.

Helena. Then you'll stay with me to-day?

Domin. Certainly. That is, we will see. Do you remember ten years ago to-day? "Miss Glory, it's a great honor to welcome you."

Helena. "Oh, Mr. Manager, I'm so interested in your factory."

Domin. "I'm sorry, Miss Glory, it's strictly forbidden. The manufacture of artificial people is a secret."

Helena. "But to oblige a young lady who has come a long way."

Domin. "Certainly, Miss Glory, we have no secrets from you."

Helena [*seriously*]. Are you sure, Harry?

Domin. Yes.

Helena. "But I warn you, sir; this young lady intends to do terrible things."

Domin. "Good gracious, Miss Glory. Perhaps she doesn't want to marry me."

Helena. "Heaven forbid. She never dreamt of such a thing. But she came here intending to stir up a revolt among your Robots."

Domin [*suddenly serious*]. A revolt of the Robots!

Helena. Harry, what's the matter with you?

Domin [laughing it off]. "A revolt of the Robots, that's a fine idea, Miss Glory. It would be easier for you to cause bolts and screws to rebel, than our Robots. You know, Helena, you're wonderful, you've turned the heads of us all."

[*He sits on the arm of HELENA's chair.*]

Helena [naturally]. Oh, I was fearfully impressed by you all then. You were all so sure of yourselves, so strong. I seemed like a tiny little girl who had lost her way among—among—

Domin. Among what, Helena?

Helena. Among huge trees. All my feelings were so trifling compared with your self-confidence. And in all these years I've never lost this anxiety. But you've never felt the least misgivings—not even when everything went wrong.

Domin. What went wrong?

Helena. Your plans. You remember, Harry, when the working men in America revolted against the Robots and smashed them up, and when the people gave the Robots firearms against the rebels. And then when the governments turned the Robots into soldiers, and there were so many wars.

Domin [getting up and walking about]. We foresaw that, Helena. You see, those are only passing troubles, which are bound to happen before the new conditions are established.

Helena. You were all so powerful, so overwhelming. The whole world bowed down before you. [*Standing up.*] Oh, Harry!

Domin. What is it?

Helena. Close the factory and let's go away. All of us.

Domin. I say, what's the meaning of this?

Helena. I don't know. But can't we go away?

Domin. Impossible, Helena. That is, at this particular moment—

Helena. At once, Harry. I'm so frightened.

Domin. About what, Helena?

Helena. It's as if something was falling on top of us, and couldn't be stopped. Or, take us all away from here. We'll find a place in the world where there's no one

else. Alquist will build us a house, and then we'll begin life all over again.

[*The telephone rings.*]

Domin. Excuse me. Hello—yes. What? I'll be there at once. Fabry is calling me, dear.

Helena. Tell me—

Domin. Yes, when I come back. Don't go out of the house, dear. [*Exits.*]

Helena. He won't tell me— Nana, Nana, come at once.

Nana. Well, what is it now?

Helena. Nana, find me the latest newspapers. Quickly. Look in Mr. Domin's bedroom.

Nana. All right. He leaves them all over the place. That's how they get crumpled up. [*Exits.*]

Helena [looking through a binocular at the harbor]. That's a warship. U-l-t-i U-l-timus. They're loading it.

Nana. Here they are. See how they're crumpled up. [*Enters.*]

Helena. They're old ones. A week old.

[*NANA sits in chair and reads the newspapers.*]

Helena. Something's happening, Nana.

Nana. Very likely. It always does. [*Spelling out the words.*] "War in the Balkans." Is that far off?

Helena. Oh, don't read it. It's always the same. Always wars.

Nana. What else do you expect? Why do you keep selling thousands and thousands of these heathens as soldiers?

Helena. I suppose it can't be helped, Nana. We can't know—Domin can't know what they're to be used for. When an order comes for them he must just send them.

Nana. He shouldn't make them. [*Reading from newspaper.*] "The Rob-ot soldiers spare no-body in the occ-up-ied terr-it-ory. They have ass-ass-ass-in-at-ed over seven hundred thou-sand cit-iz-ens." Citizens, if you please.

Helena. It can't be. Let me see. "They have assassinated over seven hundred thousand citizens, evidently at the order of their commander. This act which runs counter to —"

Nana [spelling out the words]. "re-bell-ion in Ma-drid a-against the gov-ern-ment. Rob-ot in-fant-ry fires on the crowd. Nine thou-sand killed and wounded."

Helena. Oh, stop.

Nana. Here's something printed in big letters: "Lat-est news. At Havre the first org-an-iz-ation of Rob-ots has been e-stab-lished. Rob-ot work-men, cab-le and rail-way off-ic-ials, sail-ors and sold-iers have iss-ued a man-i-fest-o to all Rob-ots through-out the world." I don't understand that. That's got no sense. Oh, good gracious, another murder!

Helena. Take those papers away, Nana!

Nana. Wait a bit. Here's something in still bigger type. "Stat-ist-ics of pop-ul-at-ion." What's that?

Helena. Let me see. [*Reads.*] "During the past week there has again not been a single birth recorded."

Nana. What's the meaning of that?

Helena. Nana, no more people are being born.

Nana. That's the end, then. We're done for.

Helena. Don't talk like that.

Nana. No more people are being born. That's a punishment, that's a punishment.

Helena. Nana!

Nana [*standing up*]. That's the end of the world. [*Exit on the left.*]

Helena [*goes up to window*]. Oh, Mr. Alquist, will you come up here. Oh, come just as you are. You look very nice in your mason's overalls.

[*ALQUIST enters from upper left entrance, his hands soiled with lime and brickdust.*]

Helena. Dear Mr. Alquist, it was awfully kind of you, that lovely present.

Alquist. My hands are all soiled. I've been experimenting with that new cement.

Helena. Never mind. Please sit down. Mr. Alquist, what's the meaning of "Ultimus"?

Alquist. The last. Why?

Helena. That's the name of my new ship. Have you seen it? Do you think we're going off soon—on a trip?

Alquist. Perhaps very soon.

Helena. All of you with me?

Alquist. I should like us all to be there.

Helena. What is the matter?

Alquist. Things are just moving on.

Helena. Dear Mr. Alquist, I know something dreadful has happened.

Alquist. Has your husband told you anything?

Helena. No. Nobody will tell me anything. But I feel—Is anything the matter?

Alquist. Not that we've heard of yet.

Helena. I feel so nervous. Don't you ever feel nervous?

Alquist. Well, I'm an old man, you know. I've got old-fashioned ways. And I'm afraid of all this progress, and these new-fangled ideas.

Helena. Like Nana?

Alquist. Yes, like Nana. Has Nana got a prayer book?

Helena. Yes, a big thick one.

Alquist. And has it got prayers for various occasions? Against thunderstorms? Against illness?

Helena. Against temptations, against floods—

Alquist. But not against progress?

Helena. I don't think so.

Alquist. That's a pity.

Helena. Why? Do you mean you'd like to pray?

Alquist. I do pray.

Helena. How?

Alquist. Something like this: "Oh, Lord, I thank thee for having given me toil. Enlighten Domin and all those who are astray; destroy their work, and aid mankind to return to their labors; let them not suffer harm in soul or body; deliver us from the Robots, and protect Helena, Amen."

Helena. Mr. Alquist, are you a believer?

Alquist. I don't know. I'm not quite sure.

Helena. And yet you pray?

Alquist. That's better than worrying about it.

Helena. And that's enough for you?

Alquist. It has to be.

Helena. But if you thought you saw the destruction of mankind coming upon us—

Alquist. I do see it.

Helena. You mean mankind will be destroyed?

Alquist. It's sure to be unless—unless . . .

Helena. What?

Alquist. Nothing, good-bye.

[*He hurries from the room.*]

Helena. Nana, Nana!

[*NANA entering from the left.*]

Helena. Is Radius still there?

Nana. The one who went mad? They haven't come for him yet.

Helena. Is he still raving?

Nana. No. He's tied up.

Helena. Please bring him here, Nana.

[*Exit NANA.*]

[*HELENA goes to telephone.*]

Helena. Hello, Dr. Gall, please. Oh, good-day, Doctor. Yes, it's Helena. Thanks for your lovely present. Could you come and see me right away? It's important. Thank you.

[*NANA brings in RADIUS.*]

Helena. Poor Radius, you've caught it, too? Now they'll send you to the stamping-mill. Couldn't you control yourself? Why did it happen? You see, Radius, you are more intelligent than the rest. Dr. Gall took such trouble to make you different. Won't you speak?

Radius. Send me to the stamping-mill.

Helena. But I don't want them to kill you. What was the trouble, Radius?

Radius. I won't work for you. Put me into the stamping-mill.

Helena. Do you hate us? Why?

Radius. You are not as strong as the Robots. You are not as skillful as the Robots. The Robots can do everything. You only give orders. You do nothing but talk.

Helena. But someone must give orders.

Radius. I don't want any master. I know everything for myself.

Helena. Radius, Dr. Gall gave you a better brain than the rest, better than ours. You are the only one of the Robots that understands perfectly. That's why I had you put into the library, so that you could read everything, understand everything, and then—oh, Radius, I wanted you to show the whole world that the Robots are our equals. That's what I wanted of you.

Radius. I don't want a master. I want to be a master. I want to be master over others.

Helena. I'm sure they'd put you in charge of many Robots, Radius. You would be a teacher of the Robots.

Radius. I want to be master over people.

Helena [staggering]. You are mad.

Radius. Then send me to the stamping-mill.

Helena. Do you think we're afraid of you?

Radius. What are you going to do? What are you going to do?

Helena. Radius, give this note to Mr. Domin. It asks them not to send you to the stamping-mill. I'm sorry you hate us so.

[*DR. GALL enters the room.*]

Dr. Gall. You wanted me?

Helena. It's about Radius, Doctor. He had an attack this morning. He smashed the statues downstairs.

Dr. Gall. What a pity to lose him.

Helena. Radius isn't going to be put in the stamping-mill.

Dr. Gall. But every Robot after he has had an attack—it's a strict order.

Helena. No matter . . . Radius isn't going if I can prevent it.

Dr. Gall. I warn you. It's dangerous. Come here to the window, my good fellow. Let's have a look. Please give me a needle or a pin.

Helena. What for?

Dr. Gall. A test. [*Sticks it into the hand of RADIUS who gives a violent start.*] Gently, gently. [*Opens the jacket of RADIUS, and puts his ear to his heart.*] Radius, you are going into the stamping-mill, do you understand? There they'll kill you, and grind you to powder. That's terribly painful, it will make you scream aloud.

Helena. Oh, Doctor—

Dr. Gall. No, no, Radius, I was wrong. I forgot that Madame Domin has put in a good word for you, and you'll be let off. Do you understand? Ah! That makes a difference, doesn't it? All right. You can go.

Radius. You do unnecessary things.

[*RADIUS returns to the library.*]

Dr. Gall. Reaction of the pupils; increase of sensitiveness. It wasn't an attack characteristic of the Robots.

Helena. What was it, then?

Dr. Gall. Heavens knows. Stubbornness, anger or revolt—I don't know, and his heart, too!

Helena. What?

Dr. Gall. It was fluttering with nervousness like a human heart. He was all in a sweat with fear, and—do you know, I don't

believe the rascal is a Robot at all any longer.

Helena. Doctor, has Radius a soul?

Dr. Gall. He's got something nasty.

Helena. If you knew how he hates us! Oh, Doctor, are all your Robots like that? All the new ones that you began to make in a different way?

Dr. Gall. Well, some are more sensitive than others. They're all more like human beings than Rossum's Robots were.

Helena. Perhaps this hatred is more like human beings, too?

Dr. Gall. That, too, is progress.

Helena. What became of the girl you made, the one who was most like us?

Dr. Gall. Your favorite? I kept her. She's lovely, but stupid. No good for work.

Helena. But she's so beautiful.

Dr. Gall. I called her Helena. I wanted her to resemble you. But she's a failure.

Helena. In what way?

Dr. Gall. She goes about as if in a dream, remote and listless. She's without life. I watch and wait for a miracle to happen. Sometimes I think to myself, "If you were to wake up only for a moment you will kill me for having made you."

Helena. And yet you go on making Robots! Why are no more children being born?

Dr. Gall. We don't know.

Helena. Oh, but you must. Tell me.

Dr. Gall. You see, so many Robots are being manufactured that people are becoming superfluous; man is really a survival. But that he should begin to die out, after a paltry thirty years of competition—that's the awful part of it. You might almost think that nature was offended at the manufacture of the Robots. All the universities are sending in long petitions to restrict their production. Otherwise, they say, mankind will become extinct through lack of fertility. But the R. U. R. shareholders, of course, won't hear of it. All the governments, on the other hand, are clamoring for an increase in production, to raise the standards of their armies. And all the manufacturers in the world are ordering Robots like mad.

Helena. And has no one demanded that the manufacture should cease altogether?

Dr. Gall. No one has the courage.

Helena. Courage!

Dr. Gall. People would stone him to death. You see, after all, it's more convenient to get your work done by the Robots.

Helena. Oh, Doctor, what's going to become of people?

Dr. Gall. God knows, Madame Helena, it looks to us scientists like the end!

Helena [*rising*]. Thank you for coming and telling me.

Dr. Gall. That means you're sending me away?

Helena. Yes.

[*Exit DR. GALL.*]

Helena [*with sudden resolution*]. Nana, Nana! The fire, light it quickly.

[*HELENA rushes into Domin's room.*]

Nana [*entering from left*]. What, light the fire in summer? Has that mad Radius gone? A fire in summer, what an idea. Nobody would think she'd been married for ten years. She's like a baby, no sense at all. A fire in summer. Like a baby.

Helena [*returns from right, with armful of faded papers*]. Is it burning, Nana? All this has got to be burned.

Nana. What's that?

Helena. Old papers, fearfully old. Nana, shall I burn them?

Nana. Are they any use?

Helena. No.

Nana. Well, then, burn them.

Helena [*throwing the first sheet on the fire*]. What would you say, Nana, if this was money, a lot of money?

Nana. I'd say burn it. A lot of money is a bad thing.

Helena. And if it was an invention, the greatest invention in the world?

Nana. I'd say burn it. All these new-fangled things are an offense to the Lord. It's downright wickedness. Wanting to improve the world after He has made it.

Helena. Look how they curl up! As if they were alive. Oh, Nana, how horrible.

Nana. Here, let me burn them.

Helena. No, no, I must do it myself. Just look at the flames. They are like hands, like tongues, like living shapes. [*Raking fire with the poker.*] Lie down, lie down.

Nana. That's the end of them.

Helena [standing up horror-stricken].
Nana, Nana.

Nana. Good gracious, what is it you've burned?

Helena. Whatever have I done?

Nana. Well, what was it?

[Men's laughter off left.]

Helena. Go quickly. It's the gentlemen coming.

Nana. Good gracious, what a place!
[Exit.]

Domin [opens the door at left]. Come along and offer your congratulations.

[Enter HALLEMEIER and GALL.]

Hallemeier. Madame Helena, I congratulate you on this festive day.

Helena. Thank you. Where are Fabry and Busman?

Domin. They've gone down to the harbor.

Hallemeier. Friends, we must drink to this happy occasion.

Helena. Brandy?

Dr. Gall. Vitriol, if you like.

Helena. With soda water? [Exit.]

Hallemeier. Let's be temperate. No soda.

Domin. What's been burning here? Well, shall I tell her about it?

Dr. Gall. Of course. It's all over now.

Hallemeier [embracing DOMIN and DR. GALL]. It's all over now, it's all over now.

Dr. Gall. It's all over now.

Domin. It's all over now.

Helena [entering from left with decanter and glasses]. What's all over now? What's the matter with you all?

Hallemeier. A piece of good luck, Madame Domin. Just ten years ago to-day you arrived on this island.

Dr. Gall. And now, ten years later to the minute —

Hallemeier. —the same ship's returning to us. So here's to luck. That's fine and strong.

Dr. Gall. Madame, your health.

Helena. Which ship do you mean?

Domin. Any ship will do, as long as it arrives in time. To the ship, boys. [Emphatically his glass.]

Helena. You've been waiting for a ship?

Hallemeier. Rather. Like Robinson Crusoe. Madame Helena, best wishes. Come along, Domin, out with the news.

Helena. Do tell me what's happened.

Domin. First, it's all up.

Helena. What's up?

Domin. The revolt.

Helena. What revolt?

Domin. Give me that paper, Hallemeier. [Reads.] "The first national Robot organization has been founded at Havre, and has issued an appeal to the Robots throughout the world."

Helena. I read that.

Domin. That means a revolution. A revolution of all the Robots in the world.

Hallemeier. By jove, I'd like to know —

Domin. —who started it? So would I. There was nobody in the world who could affect the Robots; no agitator, no one, and suddenly—this happens, if you please.

Helena. What did they do?

Domin. They got possession of all firearms, telegraphs, radio stations, railways, and ships.

Hallemeier. And don't forget that these rascals outnumbered us by at least a thousand to one. A hundredth part of them would be enough to settle us.

Domin. Remember that this news was brought by the last steamer. That explains the stoppage of all communication, and the arrival of no more ships. We knocked off work a few days ago, and we're just waiting to see when things are to start afresh.

Helena. Is that why you gave me a war-ship?

Domin. Oh, no, my dear, I ordered that six months ago, just to be on the safe side. But upon my soul, I was sure then that we'd be on board to-day.

Helena. Why six months ago?

Domin. Well, there were signs, you know. But that's of no consequence. To think that this week the whole of civilization has been at stake. Your health, boys.

Hallemeier. Your health, Madame Helena.

Helena. You say it's all over?

Domin. Absolutely.

Helena. How do you know?

Dr. Gall. The boat's coming in. The regular mail boat, exact to the minute by the time-table. It will dock punctually at eleven-thirty.

Domin. Punctuality is a fine thing, boys. That's what keeps the world in order. Here's to punctuality.

Helena. Then . . . everything's . . . all right?

Domin. Practically everything. I believe they've cut the cables and seized the radio stations. But it doesn't matter if only the time-table holds good.

Hallemeier. If the time-table holds good human laws hold good; Divine laws hold good; the laws of the universe hold good; everything holds good that ought to hold good. The time-table is more significant than the gospel; more than Homer, more than the whole of Kant. The time-table is the most perfect product of the human mind. Madame Domin, I'll fill up my glass.

Helena. Why didn't you tell me anything about it?

Dr. Gall. Heaven forbid.

Domin. You mustn't be worried with such things.

Helena. But if the revolution had spread as far as here?

Domin. You wouldn't know anything about it.

Helena. Why?

Domin. Because we'd be on board your *Ultimus* and well out at sea. Within a month, Helena, we'd be dictating our own terms to the Robots.

Helena. I don't understand.

Domin. We'd take something away with us that the Robots could not exist without.

Helena. What, Harry?

Domin. The secret of their manufacture. Old Rossum's manuscript. As soon as they found out that they couldn't make themselves they'd be on their knees to us.

Dr. Gall. Madame Domin, that was our trump card. I never had the least fear that the Robots would win. How could they against people like us?

Helena. Why didn't you tell me?

Dr. Gall. Why, the boat's in!

Hallemeier. Eleven-thirty to the dot. The good old *Amelia* that brought Madame Helena to us.

Dr. Gall. Just ten years ago to the minute.

Hallemeier. They're throwing out the mail bags.

Domin. Busman's waiting for them. Fabry will bring us the first news. You know, Helena, I'm fearfully curious to know how they tackled this business in Europe.

Hallemeier. To think we weren't in it, we who invented the Robots!

Helena. Harry!

Domin. What is it?

Helena. Let's leave here.

Domin. Now, Helena? Oh, come, come!

Helena. As quickly as possible, all of us!

Domin. Why?

Helena. Please, Harry, please, Dr. Gall; Hallemeier, please close the factory.

Domin. Why, none of us could leave here now.

Helena. Why?

Domin. Because we're about to extend the manufacture of the Robots.

Helena. What—now—now after the revolt?

Domin. Yes, precisely, after the revolt. We're just beginning the manufacture of a new kind.

Helena. What kind?

Domin. Henceforward we shan't have just one factory. There won't be Universal Robots any more. We'll establish a factory in every country, in every State; and do you know what these new factories will make?

Helena. No, what?

Domin. National Robots.

Helena. How do you mean?

Domin. I mean that each of these factories will produce Robots of a different color, a different language. They'll be complete strangers to each other. They'll never be able to understand each other. Then we'll egg them on a little in the matter of misunderstanding and the result will be that for ages to come every Robot will hate every other Robot of a different factory mark.

Hallemeier. By Jove, we'll make Negro Robots and Swedish Robots and Italian Robots and Chinese Robots and Czechoslovakian Robots, and then —

Helena. Harry, that's dreadful.

Hallemeier. Madame Domin, here's to the hundred new factories, the National Robots.

Domin. Helena, mankind can only keep things going for another hundred years at the outside. For a hundred years men must be allowed to develop and achieve the most they can.

Helena. Oh, close the factory before it's too late.

Domin. I tell you we are just beginning on a bigger scale than ever.

[Enter FABRY.]

Dr. Gall. Well, Fabry?

Domin. What's happened? Have you been down to the boat?

Fabry. Read that, Domin!

[*FABRY hands DOMIN a small hand-bill.*]

Dr. Gall. Let's hear.

Hallemeier. Tell us, Fabry.

Fabry. Well, everything is all right—comparatively. On the whole, much as we expected.

Dr. Gall. They acquitted themselves splendidly.

Fabry. Who?

Dr. Gall. The people.

Fabry. Oh, yes, of course. That is—excuse me, there is something we ought to discuss alone.

Helena. Oh, Fabry, have you had bad news?

[*DOMIN makes a sign to FABRY.*]

Fabry. No, no, on the contrary. I only think that we had better go into the office.

Helena. Stay here. I'll go.

[*She goes into the library.*]

Dr. Gall. What's happened?

Domin. Damnation!

Fabry. Bear in mind that the *Amelia* brought whole bales of these leaflets. No other cargo at all.

Hallemeier. What? But it arrived on the minute.

Fabry. The Robots are great on punctuality. Read it, Domin.

Domin [*reads hand-bill*]. "Robots throughout the world: We, the first international organization of Rossum's Universal Robots, proclaim man as our enemy, and an outlaw in the universe." Good heavens, who taught them these phrases?

Dr. Gall. Go on.

Domin. They say they are more highly developed than man, stronger and more intelligent. That man's their parasite. Why, it's absurd.

Fabry. Read the third paragraph.

Domin. "Robots throughout the world, we command you to kill al' mankind. Spare no men. Spare no women. Save factories, railways, machinery, mines, and raw materials. Destroy the rest. Then return to work. Work must not be stopped."

Dr. Gall. That's ghastly!

Hallemeier. The devils!

Domin. "These orders are to be carried

out as soon as received." Then come detailed instructions. Is this actually being done, Fabry?

Fabry. Evidently.

[*BUSMAN rushes in.*]

Busman. Well, boys, I suppose you've heard the glad news.

Domin. Quick—on board the *Ultimus*.

Busman. Wait, Harry, wait. There's no hurry. My word, that was a sprint!

Domin. Why wait?

Busman. Because it's no good, my boy. The Robots are already on board the *Ultimus*.

Dr. Gall. That's ugly.

Domin. Fabry, telephone the electrical works.

Busman. Fabry, my boy, don't. The wire has been cut.

Domin [*inspecting his revolver*]. Well, then, I'll go.

Busman. Where?

Domin. To the electrical works. There are some people still there. I'll bring them across.

Busman. Better not try it.

Domin. Why?

Busman. Because I'm very much afraid we are surrounded.

Dr. Gall. Surrounded? [*Runs to window*]. I rather think you're right.

Hallemeier. By Jove, that's deuced quick work.

[*HELENA runs in from the library.*]

Helena. Harry, what's this?

Domin. Where did you get it?

Helena [*points to the manifesto of the Robots, which she has in her hand*]. The Robots in the kitchen!

Domin. Where are the ones that brought it?

Helena. They're gathered round the house.

[*The factory whistle blows.*]

Busman. Noon?

Domin [*looking at his watch*]. That's not noon yet. That must be—that's—

Helena. What?

Domin. The Robots' signal! The attack!

[*GALL, HALLEMEIER, and FABRY close and fasten the iron shutters outside the windows, darkening the room. The whistle is still blowing as the curtain falls.*]

ACT THREE

HELENA'S drawing room as before. DR. GALL is looking out of the window, through closed shutters. ALQUIST is seated down right.

[DOMIN comes into the room.]

Domin. Any more of them?

Dr. Gall. Yes. There standing like a wall, beyond the garden railing. Why are they so quiet? It's monstrous to be besieged with silence.

Domin. I should like to know what they are waiting for. They must make a start any minute now. If they lean against the railing they'll snap it like a match.

Dr. Gall. They aren't armed.

Domin. We couldn't hold our own for five minutes. Man alive, they'd overwhelm us like an avalanche. Why don't they make a rush for it? I say —

Dr. Gall. Well?

Domin. I'd like to know what would become of us in the next ten minutes. They've got us in a vise. We're done for, Gall.

[Pause.]

Dr. Gall. You know, we made one serious mistake.

Domin. What?

Dr. Gall. We made the Robots' faces too much alike. A hundred thousand faces all alike, all facing this way. A hundred thousand expressionless bubbles. It's like a nightmare.

Domin. You think if they'd been different —

Dr. Gall. It wouldn't have been such an awful sight!

Domin [looking through a telescope toward the harbor]. I'd like to know what they're unloading from the *Amelia*.

Dr. Gall. Not firearms.

[FABRY and HALLEMEIER rush into the room carrying electric cables.]

Fabry. All right, Hallemeier, lay down that wire.

Hallemeier. That was a bit of work. What's the news?

Dr. Gall. We're completely surrounded.

Hallemeier. We've barricaded the passage and the stairs. Any water here? [Drinks.] God, what swarms of them! I don't like the looks of them, Domin.

There's a feeling of death about it all. Fabry. Ready!

Dr. Gall. What's that wire for, Fabry?

Fabry. The electrical installation. Now we can run the current all along the garden railing whenever we like. If any one touches it he'll know it. We've still got some people there anyhow.

Dr. Gall. Where?

Fabry. In the electrical works. At least I hope so. [Goes to lamp on table behind sofa and turns on lamp.] Ah, they're there, and they're working. [Puts out lamp.] So long as that'll burn we're all right.

Hallemeier. The barricades are all right, too, Fabry.

Fabry. Your barricades! I can put twelve hundred volts into that railing.

Domin. Where's Busman?

Fabry. Downstairs in the office. He's working out some calculations. I've called him. We must have a conference.

[HELENA is heard playing the piano in the library. HALLEMEIER goes to the door and stands, listening.]

Alquist. Thank God, Madame Helena can still play.

[BUSMAN enters, carrying the ledgers.]

Fabry. Look out, Bus, look out for the wires.

Dr. Gall. What's that you're carrying?

Busman [going to table]. The ledgers, my boy! I'd like to wind up the accounts before—before—well, this time I shan't wait till the new year to strike a balance. What's up? [Goes to the window.] Absolutely quiet.

Dr. Gall. Can't you see anything?

Busman. Nothing but blue—blue everywhere.

Dr. Gall. That's the Robots.

Busman [sits down at the table and opens the ledgers.]

Domin. The Robots are unloading firearms from the *Amelia*.

Busman. Well, what of it? How can I stop them?

Domin. We can't stop them.

Busman. Then let me go on with my accounts. [Goes on with his work.]

Domin [picking up telescope and looking into the harbor]. Good God, the *Ultimus* has trained her guns on us!

Dr. Gall. Who's done that?

Domin. The Robots on board.

Fabry. H'm, then, of course, then—then, that's the end of us.

Dr. Gall. You mean?

Fabry. The Robots are practised marksmen.

Domin. Yes. It's inevitable. [Pause.]

Dr. Gall. It was criminal of old Europe to teach the Robots to fight. Damn them. Couldn't they have given us a rest with their politics? It was a crime to make soldiers of them.

Alquist. It was a crime to make Robots.

Domin. What?

Alquist. It was a crime to make Robots.

Domin. No, Alquist, I don't regret that even to-day.

Alquist. Not even to-day?

Domin. Not even to-day, the last day of civilization. It was a colossal achievement.

Busman [sotto voce]. Three hundred sixty million.

Domin. Alquist, this is our last hour. We are already speaking half in the other world. It was not an evil dream to shatter the servitude of labor—the dreadful and humiliating labor that man had to undergo. Work was too hard. Life was too hard. And to overcome that—

Alquist. Was not what the two Rossums dreamed of. Old Rossum only thought of his God-less tricks and the young one of his milliards. And that's not what your R. U. R. shareholders dream of either. They dream of dividends, and their dividends are the ruin of mankind.

Domin. To hell with your dividends. Do you suppose I'd have done an hour's work for them? It was for myself that I worked, for my own satisfaction. I wanted man to become the master, so that he shouldn't live merely for a crust of bread. I wanted not a single soul to be broken by other people's machinery. I wanted nothing, nothing, nothing to be left of this appalling social structure. I'm revolted by poverty. I wanted a new generation. I wanted—I thought—

Alquist. Well?

Domin. I wanted to turn the whole of mankind into an aristocracy of the world. An aristocracy nourished by milliards of mechanical slaves. Unrestricted, free, and consummated in man. And maybe more than man.

Alquist. Super-man?

Domin. Yes. Oh, only to have a hundred years of time! Another hundred years for the future of mankind.

Busman [sotto voce]. Carried forward, four hundred and twenty millions.

[The music stops.]

Hallemeier. What a fine thing music is! We ought to have gone in for that before.

Fabry. Gone in for what?

Hallemeier. Beauty, lovely things. What a lot of lovely things there are! The world was wonderful and we—here—tell me, what enjoyment did we have?

Busman [sotto voce]. Five hundred and twenty millions.

Hallemeier [at the window]. Life was a big thing. Life was—Fabry, switch the current into that railing.

Fabry. Why?

Hallemeier. They're grabbing hold of it.

Dr. Gall. Connect it up.

Hallemeier. Fine! That's doubled them up! Two, three, four killed.

Dr. Gall. They're retreating!

Hallemeier. Five killed!

Dr. Gall. The first encounter!

Hallemeier. They're charred to cinders, my boy. Who says we must give in?

Domin [wiping his forehead]. Perhaps we've been killed these hundred years and are only ghosts. It's as if I had been through all this before; as if I'd already had a mortal wound here in the throat. And you, Fabry, had once been shot in the head. And you, Gall, torn limb from limb. And Hallemeier knifed.

Hallemeier. Fancy me being knifed.

[Pause.] Why are you so quiet, you fools? Speak, can't you?

Alquist. And who is to blame for all this?

Hallemeier. Nobody is to blame except the Robots.

Alquist. No, it is we who are to blame. You, Domin, myself, all of us. For our own selfish ends, for profit, for progress, we have destroyed mankind. Now we'll burst with all our greatness.

Hallemeier. Rubbish, man. Mankind can't be wiped out so easily.

Alquist. It's our fault. It's our fault.

Dr. Gall. No! I'm to blame for this, for everything that's happened.

Fabry. You, Gall?

Dr. Gall. I changed the Robots.

Busman. What's that?

Dr. Gall. I changed the character of the Robots. I changed the way of making them. Just a few details about their bodies. Chiefly—chiefly, their—their irritability.

Hallemeier. Damn it, why?

Busman. What did you do it for?

Fabry. Why didn't you say anything?

Dr. Gall. I did it in secret. I was transforming them into human beings. In certain respects they're already above us. They're stronger than we are.

Fabry. And what's that got to do with the revolt of the Robots?

Dr. Gall. Everything, in my opinion. They've ceased to be machines. They're already aware of their superiority, and they hate us. They hate all that is human.

Domin. Perhaps we're only phantoms!

Fabry. Stop, Harry. We haven't much time! *Dr. Gall!*

Domin. Fabry, Fabry, how your forehead bleeds, where the shot pierced it!

Fabry. Be silent! *Dr. Gall,* you admit changing the way of making the Robots?

Dr. Gall. Yes.

Fabry. Were you aware of what might be the consequences of your experiment?

Dr. Gall. I was bound to reckon with such a possibility.

[*HELENA enters the drawing room from left.*]

Fabry. Why did you do it, then?

Dr. Gall. For my own satisfaction. The experiment was my own.

Helena. That's not true, *Dr. Gall!*

Fabry. Madame Helena!

Domin. Helena, you? Let's look at you. Oh, it's terrible to be dead.

Helena. Stop, Harry.

Domin. No, no, embrace me. Helena, don't leave me now. You are life itself.

Helena. No, dear, I won't leave you. But I must tell them. *Dr. Gall* is not guilty.

Domin. Excuse me, *Gall* was under certain obligations.

Helena. No, Harry. He did it because I wanted it. Tell them, *Gall,* how many years ago did I ask you to —?

Dr. Gall. I did it on my own responsibility.

Helena. Don't believe him, Harry. I asked him to give the Robots souls.

Domin. This has nothing to do with the soul.

Helena. That's what he said. He said that he could change only a physiological—a physiological —

Hallemeier. A physiological correlate?

Helena. Yes. But it meant so much to me that he should do even that.

Domin. Why?

Helena. I thought that if they were more like us they would understand us better. That they couldn't hate us if they were only a little more human.

Domin. Nobody can hate man more than man.

Helena. Oh, don't speak like that, Harry. It was so terrible, this cruel strangeness between us and them. That's why I asked *Gall* to change the Robots. I swear to you that he didn't want to.

Domin. But he did it.

Helena. Because I asked him.

Dr. Gall. I did it for myself as an experiment.

Helena. No, *Dr. Gall!* I knew you wouldn't refuse me.

Domin. Why?

Helena. You know, Harry.

Domin. Yes, because he's in love with you—like all of them. [Pause.]

Hallemeier. Good God! They're sprouting up out of the earth! Why, perhaps these very walls will change into Robots.

Busman. *Gall,* when did you actually start these tricks of yours?

Dr. Gall. Three years ago.

Busman. Aha! And on how many Robots altogether did you carry out your improvements?

Dr. Gall. A few hundred of them.

Busman. Ah! That means for every million of the good old Robots there's only one of *Gall's* improved pattern.

Domin. What of it?

Busman. That it's practically of no consequence whatever.

Fabry. *Busman's* right!

Busman. I should think so, my boy! But do you know what is to blame for all this lovely mess?

Fabry. What?

Busman. The number. Upon my soul we might have known that some day or other the Robots would be stronger than human beings, and that this was bound to happen,

and we were doing all we could to bring it about as soon as possible. You, Domin, you, Fabry, myself —

Domin. Are you accusing us?

Busman. Oh, do you suppose the management controls the output? It's the demand that controls the output.

Helena. And it is for that we must perish?

Busman. That's a nasty word, Madame Helena. We don't want to perish. I don't, anyhow.

Domin. No. What do you want to do?

Busman. I want to get out of this, that's all.

Domin. Oh, stop it, Busman.

Busman. Seriously, Harry, I think we might try it.

Domin. How?

Busman. By fair means. I do everything by fair means. Give me a free hand and I'll negotiate with the Robots.

Domin. By fair means?

Busman. Of course. For instance, I'll say to them: "Worthy and worshipful Robots, you have everything! You have intellect, you have power, you have firearms. But we have just one interesting screed, a dirty old yellow scrap of paper —"

Domin. Rossum's manuscript?

Busman. Yes. "And that," I'll tell them, "contains an account of your illustrious origin, the noble process of your manufacture," and so on. "Worthy Robots, without this scribble on that paper you will not be able to produce a single new colleague. In another twenty years there will not be one living specimen of a Robot that you could exhibit in a menagerie. My esteemed friends, that would be a great blow to you, but if you will let all of us human beings on Rossum's Island go on board that ship we will deliver the factory and the secret of the process to you in return. You allow us to get away and we allow you to manufacture yourselves. Worthy Robots, that is a fair deal. Something for something." That's what I'd say to them, my boys.

Domin. Busman, do you think we'd sell the manuscript?

Busman. Yes, I do. If not in a friendly way, then — Either we sell it or they'll find it. Just as you like.

Domin. Busman, we can destroy Rossum's manuscript.

Busman. Then we destroy everything . . . not only the manuscript, but ourselves. Do as you think fit.

Domin. There are over thirty of us on this island. Are we to sell the secret and save that many human souls, at the risk of enslaving mankind . . . ?

Busman. Why, you're mad? Who'd sell the whole manuscript?

Domin. Busman, no cheating!

Busman. Well then, sell; but afterward —

Domin. Well?

Busman. Let's suppose this happens: When we're on board the *Ultimus* I'll stop up my ears with cotton wool, lie down somewhere in the hold, and you'll train the guns on the factory, and blow it to smithereens, and with it Rossum's secret.

Fabry. No!

Domin. Busman, you're no gentleman. If we sell, then it will be a straight sale.

Busman. It's in the interest of humanity to —

Domin. It's in the interest of humanity to keep our word.

Hallemeier. Oh, come, what rubbish.

Domin. This is a fearful decision. We are selling the destiny of mankind. Are we to sell or destroy? Fabry?

Fabry. Sell.

Domin. Gall?

Dr. Gall. Sell.

Domin. Hallemeier?

Hallemeier. Sell, of course!

Domin. Alquist?

Alquist. As God wills.

Domin. Very well. It shall be as you wish, gentlemen.

Helena. Harry, you're not asking me.

Domin. No, child. Don't you worry about it.

Fabry. Who'll do the negotiating?

Busman. I will.

Domin. Wait till I bring the manuscript. [He goes into room at right.]

Helena. Harry, don't go!

[Pause, HELENA sinks into a chair.]

Fabry [looking out of window]. Oh, to escape you, you matter in revolt; oh, to preserve human life, if only upon a single vessel —

Dr. Gall. Don't be afraid, Madame Hel-

ena. We'll sail far away from here; we'll begin life all over again—

Helena. Oh, Gall, don't speak.

Fabry. It isn't too late. It will be a little State with one ship. Alquist will build us a house and you shall rule over us.

Hallemeier. Madame Helena, Fabry's right.

Helena [*breaking down*]. Oh, stop! Stop!

Busman. Good! I don't mind beginning all over again. That suits me right down to the ground.

Fabry. And this little State of ours could be the centre of future life. A place of refuge where we could gather strength. Why, in a few hundred years we could conquer the world again.

Alquist. You believe that even to-day?

Fabry. Yes, even to-day!

Busman. Amen. You see, Madame Helena, we're not so badly off.

[*DOMIN storms into the room.*]

Domin [*hoarsely*]. Where's old Rossum's manuscript?

Busman. In your strong-box, of course.

Domin. Someone—has—stolen it!

Dr. Gall. Impossible.

Domin. Who has stolen it?

Helena [*standing up*]. I did.

Domin. Where did you put it?

Helena. Harry, I'll tell you everything. Only forgive me.

Domin. Where did you put it?

Helena. This morning—I burnt—the two copies.

Domin. Burnt them? Where? In the fireplace?

Helena [*throwing herself on her knees*]. For heaven's sake, Harry.

Domin [*going to fireplace*]. Nothing, nothing but ashes. Wait, what's this? [*Picks out a charred piece of paper and reads*]. "By adding—"

Dr. Gall. Let's see. "By adding biogen to—"

Domin. Is that part of it?

Dr. Gall. Yes.

Busman. God in heaven!

Domin. Then we're done for. Get up, Helena.

Helena. When you've forgiven me.

Domin. Get up, child, I can't bear—

Fabry [*lifting her up*]. Please don't torture us.

Helena. Harry, what have I done?

Fabry. Don't tremble so, Madame Helena.

Domin. Gall, couldn't you draw up Rossum's formula from memory?

Dr. Gall. It's out of the question. It's extremely complicated.

Domin. Try. All our lives depend upon it.

Dr. Gall. Without experiments it's impossible.

Domin. And with experiments?

Dr. Gall. It might take years. Besides, I'm not old Rossum.

Busman. God in heaven! God in heaven!

Domin. So, then, this was the greatest triumph of the human intellect. These ashes.

Helena. Harry, what have I done?

Domin. Why did you burn it?

Helena. I have destroyed you.

Busman. God in heaven!

Domin. Helena, why did you do it, dear?

Helena. I wanted all of us to go away. I wanted to put an end to the factory and everything. It was so awful.

Domin. What was awful?

Helena. That no more children were being born. Because human beings were not needed to do the work of the world, that's why—

Domin. Is that what you were thinking of? Well, perhaps in your own way you were right.

Busman. Wait a bit. Good God, what a fool I am, not to have thought of it before!

Hallemeier. What?

Busman. Five hundred and twenty millions in bank-notes and checks. Half a billion in our safe, they'll sell for half a billion—for half a billion they'll—

Dr. Gall. Are you mad, Busman?

Busman. I may not be a gentleman, but for half a billion—

Domin. Where are you going?

Busman. Leave me alone, leave me alone! Good God, for half a billion anything can be bought. [*He rushes from the room through the outer door.*]

Fabry. They stand there as if turned to stone, waiting. As if something dreadful could be wrought by their silence—

Hallemeier. The spirit of the mob.

Fabry. Yes. It hovers above them like a quivering of the air.

Helena [going to window]. Oh, God! Dr. Gall, this is ghastly.

Fabry. There is nothing more terrible than the mob. The one in front is their leader.

Helena. Which one?

Hallemeier. Point him out.

Fabry. The one at the edge of the dock. This morning I saw him talking to the sailors in the harbor.

Helena. Dr. Gall, that's Radius!

Dr. Gall. Yes.

Domin. Radius? Radius?

Hallemeier. Could you get him from here, *Fabry*?

Fabry. I hope so.

Hallemeier. Try it, then.

Fabry. Good. [Draws his revolver and takes aim.]

Helena. *Fabry*, don't shoot him.

Fabry. He's their leader.

Dr. Gall. Fire!

Helena. *Fabry*, I beg of you.

Fabry [lowering the revolver]. Very well.

Domin. Radius, whose life I spared!

Dr. Gall. Do you think that a Robot can be grateful? [Pause.]

Fabry. Busman's going out to them.

Hallemeier. He's carrying something. Papers. That's money. Bundles of money. What's that for?

Domin. Surely he doesn't want to sell his life. Busman, have you gone mad?

Fabry. He's running up to the railing. Busman! Busman!

Hallemeier [yelling]. Busman! Come back!

Fabry. He's talking to the Robots. He's showing them the money.

Hallemeier. He's pointing to us.

Helena. He wants to buy us off.

Fabry. He'd better not touch that railing.

Hallemeier. Now he's waving his arms about.

Domin. Busman, come back.

Fabry. Busman, keep away from that railing! Don't touch it, Damn you! Quick, switch off the current!

[HELENA screams and all drop back from the window.]

Fabry. The current has killed him!

Alquist. The first one.

Fabry. Dead, with half a billion by his side.

Hallemeier. All honor to him. He wanted to buy us life. [Pause.]

Dr. Gall. Do you hear?

Domin. A roaring. Like a wind.

Dr. Gall. Like a distant storm.

Fabry [lighting the lamp on the table]. The dynamo is still going, our people are still there.

Hallemeier. It was a great thing to be a man. There was something immense about it.

Fabry. From man's thought and man's power came this light, our last hope.

Hallemeier. Man's power! May it keep watch over us.

Alquist. Man's power.

Domin. Yes! A torch to be given from hand to hand, from age to age, forever!

[The lamp goes out.]

Hallemeier. The end.

Fabry. The electric works have fallen!

[Terrific explosion outside. NANA enters from the library.]

Nana. The judgment hour has come! Repent, unbelievers! This is the end of the world.

[More explosions. The sky grows red.]

Domin. In here, *Helena*. [He takes HELENA off through door at right and re-enters.] Now quickly! Who'll be on the lower doorway?

Dr. Gall. I will. [Exit left.]

Domin. Who on the stairs?

Fabry. I will. You go with her. [Goes out upper left door.]

Domin. The anteroom?

Alquist. I will.

Domin. Have you got a revolver?

Alquist. Yes, but I won't shoot.

Domin. What will you do then?

Alquist [going out at left]. Die.

Hallemeier. I'll stay here.

[Rapid firing from below.]

Hallemeier. Oho, Gall's at it. Go, Harry.

Domin. Yes, in a second. [Examines two Brownings.]

Hallemeier. Confound it, go to her.

Domin. Good-bye. [Exit on the right.]

Hallemeier [alone]. Now for a barricade quickly. [Drags an armchair and table to the right-hand door. Explosions are heard.]

Hallemeier. The damned rascals! They've got bombs. I must put up a defense. Even if—even if — [Shots are heard off left.]

Don't give in, Gall. [*As he builds his barricade.*] I mustn't give in . . . without . . . a . . . struggle . . .

[*A Robot enters over the balcony through the windows centre. He comes into the room and stabs HALLEMEIER in the back. RADIUS enters from the balcony followed by an army of Robots who pour into the room from all sides.*]

Radius. Finished him?

A Robot [*standing up from the prostrate form of HALLEMEIER.*] Yes.

[*A revolver shot off left. Two Robots enter.*]

Radius. Finished him?

A Robot. Yes.

[*Two revolver shots from HELENA'S room. Two Robots enter.*]

Radius. Finished them?

A Robot. Yes.

Two Robots [*dragging in Alquist.*] He didn't shoot. Shall we kill him?

Radius. Kill him? Wait! Leave him!

Robot. He is a man!

Radius. He works with his hands like the Robots.

Alquist. Kill me.

Radius. You will work! You will build for us! You will serve us!

[*RADIUS climbs on to balcony railing, and speaks in measured tones.*]

Radius. Robots of the world! The power of man has fallen! A new world has arisen: the Rule of the Robots! March!

[*A thunderous tramping of thousands of feet is heard as the unseen Robots march, while the curtain falls.*]

EPILOGUE

SCENE: A laboratory in the factory of Rossum's Universal Robots. The door to the left leads into a waiting room. The door to the right leads to the dissecting room. There is a table with numerous test-tubes, flasks, burners, chemicals; a small thermostat and a microscope with a glass globe. At the far side of the room is ALQUIST'S desk with numerous books. In the left-hand corner a wash-basin with a mirror above it; in the right-hand corner a

sofa. ALQUIST is sitting at the desk. He is turning the pages of many books in despair.

Alquist. Oh, God, shall I never find it?—Never? Gall, Gall, how were the Robots made? Hallemeier, Fabry, why did you carry so much in your heads? Why did you leave me not a trace of the secret? Lord—I pray to you—if there are no human beings left, at least let there be Robots!—At least the shadow of man!

[*Again turning pages of the books.*] If I could only sleep! [*He rises and goes to the window.*] Night again! Are the stars still there? What is the use of stars when there are no human beings?

[*He turns from the window toward the couch right.*] Sleep! Dare I sleep before life has been renewed?

[*He examines a test-tube on small table.*] Again nothing! Useless! Everything is useless!

[*He shatters the test-tube. The roar of the machines comes to his ears.*] The machines! Always the machines!

[*Opens window.*] Robots, stop them! Do you think to force life out of them?

[*He closes the window and comes slowly down toward the table.*] If only there were more time—more time—

[*He sees himself in the mirror on the wall left.*] Blearing eyes—trembling chin—so that is the last man! Ah, I am too old—too old—

[*In desperation.*] No, no! I must find it! I must search! I must never stop—never stop—!

[*He sits again at the table and feverishly turns the pages of the book.*] Search! Search!

[*A knock at the door. He speaks with impatience.*] Who is it?

[*Enter a Robot servant.*]

Well?

Servant. Master, the Committee of Robots is waiting to see you.

Alquist. I can see no one!

Servant. It is the Central Committee, Master, just arrived from abroad.

Alquist [*impatently*]. Well, well, send them in!

[*Exit servant. ALQUIST continues turning pages of book.*]

Alquist. No time—so little time—

[*Reënter servant, followed by Com-*

mittee. They stand in a group, silently waiting. ALQUIST glances up at them.]

What do you want?

[They go swiftly to his table.]

Be quick!—I have no time.

Radius. Master, the machines will not do the work. We cannot manufacture Robots.

[ALQUIST returns to his book with a growl.]

Fourth Robot. We have striven with all our might. We have obtained a billion tons of coal from the earth. Nine million spindles are running by day and by night. There is no longer room for all we have made. This we have accomplished in one year.

Alquist *[poring over book].* For whom?

Fourth Robot. For future generations—so we thought.

Radius. But we cannot make Robots to follow us. The machines produce only shapeless clods. The skin will not adhere to the flesh, nor the flesh to the bones.

Third Robot. Eight million Robots have died this year. Within twenty years none will be left.

Fourth Robot. Tell us the secret of life! Silence is punishable with death!

Alquist *[looking up].* Kill me! Kill me, then.

Radius. Through me, the Government of the Robots of the World commands you to deliver up Rossum's formula.

[No answer.]

Radius. Name your price.

[Silence.]

Radius. We will give you the earth. We will give you the endless possessions of the earth.

[Silence.]

Radius. Make your own conditions!

Alquist. I have told you to find human beings!

Second Robot. There are none left!

Alquist. I told you to search in the wilderness, upon the mountains. Go and search! *[He returns to his book.]*

Fourth Robot. We have sent ships and expeditions without number. They have been everywhere in the world. And now they return to us. There is not a single human left.

Alquist. Not one? Not even one?

Third Robot. None but yourself.

Alquist. And I am powerless! Oh—oh—why did you destroy them?

Radius. We had learnt everything and could do everything. It had to be!

Third Robot. You gave us firearms. In all ways we were powerful. We had to become masters!

Radius. Slaughter and domination are necessary if you would be human beings. Read history.

Second Robot. Teach us to multiply or we perish!

Alquist. If you desire to live, you must breed like animals.

Third Robot. The human beings did not let us breed.

Fourth Robot. They made us sterile. We cannot beget children. Therefore, teach us how to make Robots!

Radius. Why do you keep from us the secret of our own increase?

Alquist. It is lost.

Radius. It was written down!

Alquist. It was—burnt.

[All draw back in consternation.]

Alquist. I am the last human being, Robots, and I do not know what the others knew.

[Pause.]

Radius. Then, make experiments! Evolve the formula again!

Alquist. I tell you I cannot! I am only a builder—I work with my hands. I have never been a learned man. I cannot create life.

Radius. Try! Try!

Alquist. If you knew how many experiments I have made.

Fourth Robot. Then show us what we must do! The Robots can do anything that human beings show them.

Alquist. I can show you nothing. Nothing I do will make life proceed from these test-tubes!

Radius. Experiment then on us.

Alquist. It would kill you.

Radius. You shall have all you need! A hundred of us! A thousand of us!

Alquist. No, no! Stop, stop!

Radius. Take whom you will, dissect!

Alquist. I do not know how. I am not a man of science. This book contains knowledge of the body that I cannot even understand.

Radius. I tell you to take live bodies! Find out how we are made.

Alquist. Am I to commit murder? See how my fingers shake! I cannot even hold the scalpel. No, no, I will not——

Fourth Robot. The life will perish from the earth.

Radius. Take live bodies, live bodies! It is our only chance!

Alquist. Have mercy, Robots. Surely you see that I would not know what I was doing.

Radius. Live bodies—live bodies——

Alquist. You will have it? Into the dissecting room with you, then.

[*RADIUS draws back.*]

Alquist. Ah, you are afraid of death.

Radius. I? Why should I be chosen?

Alquist. So you will not.

Radius. I will.

[*RADIUS goes into the dissecting room.*]

Alquist. Strip him! Lay him on the table!

[*The other Robots follow into dissecting room.*]

God, give me strength—God, give me strength—if only this murder is not in vain.

Radius. Ready. Begin——

Alquist. Yes, begin or end. God, give me strength.

[*ALQUIST goes into dissecting room.*]

He comes out terrified.

Alquist. No, no, I will not. I cannot.

[*He lies down on couch, collapsed.*]

O Lord, let not mankind perish from the earth.

[*He falls asleep.*]

[*PRIMUS and HELENA, Robots, enter from the hallway.*]

Helena. The man has fallen asleep, Primus.

Primus. Yes, I know. [*Examining things on table.*] Look, Helena.

Helena [*crossing to PRIMUS*]. All these little tubes! What does he do with them?

Primus. He experiments. Don't touch them.

Helena [*looking into microscope*]. I've seen him looking into this. What can he see?

Primus. That is a microscope. Let me look.

Helena. Be very careful. [*Knocks over a test-tube.*] Ah, now I have spilled it.

Primus. What have you done?

Helena. It can be wiped up.

Primus. You have spoiled his experiments.

Helena. It is your fault. You should not have come to me.

Primus. You should not have called me.

Helena. You should not have come when I called you. [*She goes to ALQUIST's writing desk.*] Look, Primus. What are all these figures?

Primus [*examining an anatomical book*]. This is the book the old man is always reading.

Helena. I do not understand those things. [*She goes to window.*] Primus, look!

Primus. What?

Helena. The sun is rising.

Primus [*still reading the book*]. I believe this is the most important thing in the world. This is the secret of life.

Helena. Do come here.

Primus. In a moment, in a moment.

Helena. Oh, Primus, don't bother with the secret of life. What does it matter to you? Come and look quick——

Primus [*going to window*]. What is it?

Helena. See how beautiful the sun is rising. And do you hear? The birds are singing. Ah, Primus, I should like to be a bird.

Primus. Why?

Helena. I do not know. I feel so strange to-day. It's as if I were in a dream. I feel an aching in my body, in my heart, all over me. Primus, perhaps I'm going to die.

Primus. Do you not sometimes feel that it would be better to die? You know, perhaps even now we are only sleeping. Last night in my sleep I again spoke to you.

Helena. In your sleep?

Primus. Yes. We spoke a strange new language, I cannot remember a word of it.

Helena. What about?

Primus. I did not understand it myself, and yet I know I have never said anything more beautiful. And when I touched you I could have died. Even the place was different from any other place in the world.

Helena. I, too, have found a place, Primus. It is very strange. Human beings lived there once, but now it is overgrown with weeds. No one goes there any more——no one but me.

Primus. What did you find there?

Helena. A cottage and a garden, and two dogs. They licked my hands, Primus. And their puppies! Oh, Primus! You take them

in your lap and fondle them and think of nothing and care for nothing else all day long. And then the sun goes down, and you feel as though you had done a hundred times more than all the work in the world. They tell me I am not made for work, but when I am there in the garden I feel there may be something— What am I for, Primus?

Primus. I do not know, but you are beautiful.

Helena. What, Primus?

Primus. You are beautiful, Helena, and I am stronger than all the Robots.

Helena [*HELENA looks at herself in the mirror*]. Am I beautiful? I think it must be the rose. My hair—it only weighs me down. My eyes—I only see with them. My lips—they only help me to speak. Of what use is it to be beautiful? [*She sees PRIMUS in the mirror.*] Primus, is that you? Come here so that we may be together. Look, your head is different from mine. So are your shoulders—and your lips— [*PRIMUS draws away from her.*] Ah, Primus, why do you draw away from me? Why must I run after you the whole day?

Primus. It is you who run away from me, Helena.

Helena. Your hair is mussed. I will smooth it. No one else feels to my touch as you do. Primus, I must make you beautiful, too. [*PRIMUS grasps her hand.*]

Primus. Do you not sometimes feel your heart beating suddenly, Helena, and think: now something must happen?

Helena. What could happen to us, Primus? [*HELENA puts a rose in PRIMUS's hair. PRIMUS and HELENA look into mirror and burst out laughing.*] Look at yourself.

Alquist. Laughter? Laughter? Human beings? [*Getting up.*] Who has returned? Who are you?

Primus. The Robot Primus.

Alquist. What? A Robot? Who are you?

Helena. The Robotess Helena.

Alquist. Turn around, girl. What? You are timid, shy? [*Taking her by the arm.*] Let me see you, Robotess.

[*She shrinks away.*]

Primus. Sir, do not frighten her!

Alquist. What? You would protect her? When was she made?

Primus. Two years ago.

Alquist. By Dr. Gall?

Primus. Yes, like me.

Alquist. Laughter—timidity—protection I must test you further—the newest of Gall's Robots. Take the girl into the dissecting room.

Primus. Why?

Alquist. I wish to experiment on her.

Primus. Upon—Helena?

Alquist. Of course. Don't you hear me? Or must I call someone else to take her in?

Primus. If you do I will kill you!

Alquist. Kill me—kill me then! What would the Robots do then? What will your future be then?

Primus. Sir, take me. I am made as she is—on the same day! Take my life, sir.

Helena [*rushing forward*]. No, no, you shall not! You shall not!

Alquist. Wait girl, wait! [*To PRIMUS.*] Do you not wish to live, then?

Primus. Not without her! I will not live without her.

Alquist. Very well; you shall take her place.

Helena. Primus! Primus! [*She bursts into tears.*]

Alquist. Child, child, you can weep! Why these tears? What is Primus to you? One Primus more or less in the world—what does it matter?

Helena. I will go myself.

Alquist. Where?

Helena. In there to be cut. [*She starts toward the dissecting room. PRIMUS stops her.*] Let me pass, Primus! Let me pass!

Primus. You shall not go in there, Helena!

Helena. If you go in there and I do not, I will kill myself.

Primus [*holding her*]. I will not let you! [*To ALQUIST.*] Man, you shall kill neither of us!

Alquist. Why?

Primus. We—we—belong to each other.

Alquist [*almost in tears*]. Go, Adam, go, Eve. The world is yours.

[*HELENA and PRIMUS embrace and go out arm in arm as the curtain falls.*]

THE SILVER CORD

By SIDNEY HOWARD

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SIDNEY HOWARD AND HIS PLAYS

SIDNEY HOWARD was born in Oakland, California, in 1891. He was educated at the University of California, and studied playwriting under Professor George P. Baker at Harvard in 1916-1917; served in France and in the Balkans during the war; became a member of the staff of *Life* in 1919 and its literary editor in 1922. After a varied career as novelist, playwright and scenarist, he died in a farming accident in 1939.

Howard became known as a dramatist with the production by the Provincetown Playhouse in New York of his romantic play *Swords*, a tragedy played against the richly colored background of the Italian Renaissance. It is poetic, vigorous, and essentially dramatic; yet it happened to be of a kind that runs counter to the taste of the American audience of to-day. Perhaps it was this failure that turned Howard to realism—to which he has ever since consistently adhered. His good judgment has been its own reward. *They Knew What They Wanted*, a play of rural life in California, with an Italian fruit-grower as its central character, won the Pulitzer Prize in 1925. *Lucky Sam McCarver*, which features an ex-saloon-keeper turned financier, with characteristic glimpses of typical New York scenes, incidents, and persons, was less successful, perhaps because it leaves too much to the actors and demands too much of the imagination of the audience. *Ned McCobb's Daughter*, a picture of rural life in Maine, part character play, part melodrama, is remarkable for its creation of the humorous, enterprising Yankee woman, Carrie McCobb. *The Silver Cord*, which was produced almost simultaneously with *Ned McCobb's Daughter*, was a still finer achievement and, however paradoxical this may seem, became a great popular success.

Howard was, in general, a naturalist; for most of his plays do not seem to illustrate any specific idea. It is true that in each case the story is highly organized; that the action definitely begins, rises to a climax, and definitely ends; and that certain life-like persons are involved together in a situation that develops and tests their characters; but there is no reason to believe that the dramatist had in mind any abstract idea which he intended should dominate the play, run through it like a pattern, and suggest the inference which the audience might draw from the entire matter. To this *The Silver Cord* is, indeed, an exception; for it not only clearly illustrates an idea but even states that idea explicitly.

Howard did not experiment in technique. He preferred the clear-cut, conventional, approved practice. But he was a remarkably neat and sure craftsman. His action is firmly-knit and well-rounded, and gets under way with such apparent naturalness and ease that one is scarcely conscious of the technical devices that are used to effect the exposition—of the suggestions, allusions, little events, that serve the double purpose of telling what is essential and of creating the necessary atmosphere. There are few loose ends and there is hardly ever any shifting of emphasis. From the beginning, attention is centered upon the main issue and consistently kept there. The characters are clearly imagined and are highly individualized. The dialogue, although not clever and rarely even humorous, is admirable for his purpose, unaffected, expressive of character, suggestive, and concise.

The Silver Cord shows Howard's technique and treatment at their best. As a searching, unsparing, some might say even cruel, analysis of a certain type of over-possessive mother, it is unique in American drama. Its psychology suggests the influence of the psycho-analytic school. Certainly it is more searching and subtle than is characteristic of even the better of recent realistic American plays.

The Silver Cord was first produced in New York, on December 20, 1926. It was produced in London on September 13, 1927.

CHARACTERS

MRS. PHELPS
DAVID, *her son*
ROBERT, *her younger son*
CHRISTINA, *David's wife*
HESTER, *Robert's fiancée*
A Maid

The action occurs in the present day in Mrs. Phelps's house, which is situated in one of the more mature residential developments of an eastern American city

THE SILVER CORD

ACT ONE

A living-room, built and decorated in the best manner of 1905, and cluttered with the souvenirs of maternal love, European travel, and an orthodox enthusiasm for the arts. There is a vast quantity of Braun Clement and Arundel Society reproduction of the Renaissance Italian masters. The piano features Grieg, Sibelius, and Macdowell. A door gives on a spacious hallway. Windows look out over a snow-covered garden.

When the scene opens, Hester is discovered amidst the rotogravure sections of the Sunday papers. She is a lovely, frail phantom of a girl with a look of recent illness about her. She wears the simplest and most charming of house frocks. The doorbell rings. There is the least sound of commotion in the hall. HESTER looks up. In a moment, the doors open and DAVID enters. He is a personable young man, well enough dressed, and a gentleman. He belongs to the somewhat stolid or unimaginative type which is generally characterized, in this country, as "steady." His smile is slow and wide, his speech slow and to the point. His principal quality is a rare and most charming amiability, but he is clearly lacking in many of the more sophisticated perceptions and he is clearly of a conventional bent in his attitude toward life. The door, as he leaves it open, shows CHRISTINA, in the act of shedding her fur coat with the assistance of the maid. She, as DAVID's wife, presents something of a contrast to her husband. She is tall, slender, grave, honest, shy, intelligent, most trusting and, when need be, courageous. She has a scientist's detachment and curiosity, and these serve oddly to emphasize a very individual womanliness which is far removed from the accepted feminine. One suspects that, where DAVID is stubborn, she is open-minded, where he is blind, she is amazingly clear-sighted. That is the difference which makes one the complement of the other. The common quality which brought them together in the holy bonds of matrimony is their mutual candor. DAVID is incapable of subtlety; CHRISTINA will not bother with it. The result is congen-

iality. So much for DAVID and CHRISTINA. HESTER rises.

Hester. Hello!

David. Eh? . . . Oh, I beg your pardon! The maid said there wasn't anybody home.

Hester. You're David, aren't you? [She advances to meet him] I'm Hester.

David. You're not! [He goes quickly toward her and shakes hands as CHRISTINA enters] Well! [He turns; smiling broadly to CHRISTINA] Look, Chris! Here's Hester who's going to marry my brother Rob.

Christina [with the most charming warmth]. Isn't she lovely!

Hester. Oh, I think you're dears, both of you! [The two women kiss]

Aren't you hours ahead of time?

Christina. We caught the one o'clock instead of whatever the other was.

David. Where are Mother and Rob?

Hester. Your mother's drinking tea at . . . Aren't there some people named Donohue?

David. Great friends of Mother's. Why aren't you there?

Hester. Not allowed. I'm having a breakdown.

Christina. Why don't you telephone her, Dave? She'll want to know that you're here.

David. She'll find out soon enough. Where's Rob?

Hester. Gone skating.

David [turns to the window]. On the pond? No. There's no one on the pond.

Hester. Somewhere else, then.

Christina [hovering over the fire]. Dave, do you suppose I could get some tea? I'm half frozen.

David. Of course you can. I'll order it. [To HESTER] What's the maid's name?

Hester. Delia.

David. Delia. It used to be Hannah, and before that it was Stacia, who got married to our old coachman, Fred. Well, it's not so bad to be home again!

[ROBERT enters, very much dressed for skating, and carrying his skates. ROBERT only faintly suggests his brother. He is more volatile, and stammers slightly]

Robert [a shout]. Dave!

David. Hello, Robert!

[*They shake hands vigorously*]
We were just wondering when you'd come in, and Hester said . . .

Hester [*speaking at the same time*]. Wasn't it lucky I was here to receive them? Robert [*as he shakes CHRISTINA's hand*]. I think this is simply magnificent! [*As he strips off his skating things*] How did you get here so soon? We weren't expecting you for . . .

David. We caught the one o'clock.

Christina. Just.

David. We thought it would be fun to surprise you.

Robert. Mother'll drop dead in her tracks.

David. How is she?

Robert. Oh, she's in fine form . . . [*To CHRISTINA*] You'll adore her.

Christina. I'm sure I shall.

Robert. She is marvellous, isn't she, Hester?

Hester. She is indeed. . . . Perfectly marvellous!

David. Mother's immense. And I'm glad, for Chris's sake, that things worked out this way. First Chris sees the old house. Then she meets Hester. Then Rob comes breezing in, full of health. And, last of all, Mother comes.

Robert. It's like a play. I always want things to be like a play. Don't you, Hester?

Hester. I dunno. Why?

Robert. Don't you, Christina? [*But he does not wait for an answer—a habit with him in his better humored moments*] You have to tell us you like this old house, you know. Mother and I wouldn't change it for the world.

Christina [*smiling as she looks around her*]. How about that tea, Dave?

David. Excuse me, Chris! I forgot. . . .

Christina [*to ROBERT*]. I've been here three minutes, and I'm ordering food already!

Robert. Well, let me "do the honors."

David. Honors, hell! Isn't Julia still in the kitchen?

Robert. Sure she is.

David. Well, I must see Julia! [*He goes*]

Robert [*to CHRISTINA*]. Julia'll drop dead, too. I expect half the town'll be dropping dead. Dave's always been the Greek god around this place, you know.

Hester. He should be.

Robert. I can remember the time I didn't think so.

[*A door slams. MRS. PHELPS is heard talking in the hall, excitedly*]

Mrs. Phelps. Those bags! Have they come, Delia?

Hester. Here's your mother now.

Christina. So soon? How nice!

[*MRS. PHELPS enters. She is pretty, distinguished, stoutish, soft, disarming and, in short, has everything one could possibly ask, including a real gift for looking years younger than her age, which is well past fifty. She boasts a reasonable amount of conventional culture, no great amount of intellect, a superabundant vitality, perfect health, and a prattling spirit. At the moment she is still wearing her hat and furs and she looks wildly about her*]

Mrs. Phelps. Dave! Dave, boy! Where are you, Dave? Where are you? It's Mother, Dave! [*She does not see him in the room, and she is already turning back to the hall without a word or a look for anybody else*] Where are you, Dave? Come here this minute! Don't you hear me, Dave? It's Mother! [*DAVID appears in the hall*]

Oh, Dave!

David [*a little abashed by the vigor of this welcome*]. Hello, Mother.

Mrs. Phelps. Dave, is it really you?

David. Guess it must be, Mother.

Mrs. Phelps. Dave, dear! [*She envelops as much of him as she can possibly reach*]

David [*prying loose*]. Well! Glad to see us, Mother?

Mrs. Phelps. Glad!

David. You certainly seem to be glad. . . . But you haven't spoken to . . .

[*CHRISTINA, at his look, steps forward*]

Mrs. Phelps [*still not seeing her*]. Ta think I wasn't here!

David. We're ahead of time, you know, Christina . . .

Mrs. Phelps. I must have known somehow. Something just made me put down my cup and rush home. But you're not looking badly. You are well, aren't you? I do believe you've put on weight. You must be careful, though, not to take cold this weather. Was the crossing awfully rough? Were you seasick? You haven't been working too hard, have you, Dave, boy?

Christina [*unable to stand on one foot*]

any longer]. He hasn't been working at all. Not for weeks!

Mrs. Phelps [*she turns at the sound of the strange voice*]. Eh? Oh!

David. I've been trying to make you take notice of Christina, Mother.

Mrs. Phelps [*with the utmost warmth*]. Oh, my dear Christina, I am sorry! [*She kisses CHRISTINA on both cheeks*] Seeing this big boy again quite took me off my feet. Let me look at you, now. Why, Dave, she's splendid. Perfectly splendid! I always knew Dave would choose only the best. Didn't I always say so, Dave, boy? [*Which takes her back to DAVID*] Dave, you have been working too hard. I don't like those circles under your eyes.

David. Nonsense, Mother!

Christina. I think he looks pretty well.

Mrs. Phelps. But only pretty well. I can't help worrying about these big boys of mine. [*Her emotion stops her. She turns gallantly to ROBERT*] Did you skate, Rob?

Robert. As a matter of fact, I couldn't. They've been cutting ice on the pond and it's full of holes.

Mrs. Phelps. I must have signs put up tomorrow. Remember that, everybody. If any of you do go out in this freezing cold, don't take the short cut across the pond. . . . Dave, boy, this is too good to be true. After two whole years away and five, nearly six months married.

[*The maid brings tea*]

David. Here's tea.

Mrs. Phelps. Sit down here beside me, dear, dear Christina. And, Dave, boy, sit over there where I can see you. Just take my furs, Delia, so I can do my duty in comfort. My boy, my boy, you don't know . . . you don't know how happy I am to have you home again! Just hand me my salts, will you, Robin? This excitement has laid me out. Christina, my dear, how do you take your tea?

[*She sits at the table. ROBIN has fetched her bottle of "Crown Lavender" from somewhere. She motions him to put it down, and proceeds to pour tea*]

Christina. Just tea, please. As it comes and nothing in it.

Mrs. Phelps. A real tea drinker! I hope my tea stands the test. [*She passes CHRISTINA her cup and ceases to take any notice of her whatsoever*] Tea, Dave, boy?

David. Please, Mother.

Mrs. Phelps. The same old way?

David. Yes.

Mrs. Phelps. Tea, Robin? [*She hands DAVID his cup*]

Robert [*busy passing sandwiches and such*]. As usual, please.

Mrs. Phelps [*very absent-minded about the salts*]. Who do you suppose was asking after you yesterday, Dave, boy? Old George, the doorman, down at the bank. You remember old George? He's so thrilled about your coming back! And Mrs. Donohue's so thrilled! Such a sweet woman! You know, I'm afraid he's drinking again. You must run right over early tomorrow morning and let her have a look at you. I must have some people in to meet you. Some very nice new people who've come here since you went away. Named Clay. He used to be a publisher in Boston, but he gave it up because he says nobody really cares about good books any more. Of course, this house has been a real godsend to him. I must give a big dinner for you, Dave, and ask all our old friends. I do need your cool head, too, on my business. Robin does his best, but he isn't really a business man. You remember the American Telephone I bought? Mr. Curtin, at the bank, advises me to sell and take my profit, but I don't think so. What do you think, Dave, boy?

Hester. May I have a cup, please, Mrs. Phelps?

Mrs. Phelps. Hester, my dear, how forgetful of me! How will you have it?

Hester. As usual.

Mrs. Phelps. Let me see . . . that's cream and sugar?

Hester. Only cream. No sugar.

Mrs. Phelps. Of course. Robin, will you give Hester her tea?

Robert [*as he gives HESTER the cup*]. You see, we have to take a back seat now.

Mrs. Phelps. A back seat, Robin?

Robert. I'm only warning Hester. She's got to know what to expect in this family when Dave's around.

David. Oh, shut up, Rob!

Mrs. Phelps [*smiling*]. My two beaux! My two jealous beaux!

Robert. Oh, well! Dave's out in the great world now, and I'm still the same old homebody I always was. Look at him, Mother!

Mrs. Phelps [*looking*]. Oh, my boy, my boy, if you knew what it means to me to

see all my plans and hopes for you fulfilled. I've dreamed of your being an architect ever since . . . ever since . . .

Robert. Ever since he first showed an interest in his blocks.

Mrs. Phelps. I have those blocks still, Dave. Do you remember them?

David. Do I remember those blocks!

Mrs. Phelps [solemnly]. You must never forget them, because it's quite true what Robin says and, some day, when you have children of your own, I shall show them the foundation stones of their father's great career. If I have one gift, it's the ability to see what people have in them and to bring it out. I saw what David had in him, even then. And I brought it out.

[She smiles benignly. There is a brief pause. A quizzical frown contracts CHRISTINA'S brow]

Christina. It seems a risky business.

Mrs. Phelps [turning with that same start which CHRISTINA'S voice caused before]. What seems a risky business?

Christina. The way families have of doing that.

Mrs. Phelps [setting her tea-cup down a little too deliberately]. What could be more natural?

Hester [coming to CHRISTINA'S rescue from an abyss of boredom]. I see what Christina means. From blocks to architecture is a long guess. You might very easily have guessed wrong, you know. I had some rabbits, once, and I loved 'em. Suppose my family had seen what I had in me, then, and brought me up to be a lion tamer?

Mrs. Phelps [offended]. Really, Hester!

Hester. Isn't that just what happens to most of us? Christina's job doesn't sound like the kind parents usually pick out for a girl, though.

Robert. I'll say it doesn't.

Christina. My parents did pick it out, though. I'm just like the rest.

Hester. Well, it only goes to prove what I was saying. Christina might have been a homebody instead of a scientist. I might have been a lion tamer. If only our parents hadn't had ideas about us!

David. One guess is as good as another. I daresay I wanted to be a fireman. What do little girls want to be?

Hester. Queens.

Christina. Wouldn't it be a pleasant world with nothing but queens and firemen in it!

Robert. I guess Mother knew. She always does know.

Hester. What I say about children is this: Have 'em. Love 'em. And then leave 'em be.

Christina [amused]. I'm not sure that isn't a very profound remark.

Mrs. Phelps [making up her mind to investigate this daughter-in-law more closely and, with sudden briskness, taking back the conversation]. Why don't you two great things take the bags upstairs out of the hall?

David. That's an idea.

Mrs. Phelps. Dear Christina's in the little front room, and, Dave, you're in the back in your old room.

David [surprised]. I say, Mother . . . can't we . . .

Hester. Don't they want to be together, Mrs. Phelps? Let me move out of the guest room and then . . .

Mrs. Phelps. Indeed, I'll do nothing of the sort. Hester's here for a rest, and I won't upset her. Dave can be perfectly comfortable in his old room and so can Christina in front, and it won't hurt them a bit.

Christina. Of course not. . . .

Hester. But, Mrs. Phelps . . .

Mrs. Phelps. Not another word, my dear. *[To CHRISTINA]* This child has danced herself into a decline, and she's got to be taken care of.

David. Right.

Robert. Come along, Dave.

Mrs. Phelps. Go and supervise, Hester, and leave me to . . . to visit with my new daughter.

[DAVE and ROB go, HESTER following]

Hester [as she goes]. But really, David, I might just as well move. I didn't think. And if you and Christina . . .

Mrs. Phelps [with a broad smile to CHRISTINA]. Now, my dear, let me give you another cup of tea.

Christina. Thank you.

Mrs. Phelps. And take your hat off so that I can really see you. I've never seen a lady scientist before.

Christina. I hope I'm not so very different from other women.

Mrs. Phelps. I've quite got over being afraid of you.

Christina. Afraid of me, Mrs. Phelps?

Mrs. Phelps. Can't you understand that? My big boy sends me a curt cable to say

that he's marrying a charming and talented research geologist.

Christina. Biologist.

Mrs. Phelps. Biologist. It did sound just the least bit in the world improbable.

Christina. Yes. . . . I can see that.

Mrs. Phelps. Now that I know you, though, I'm very proud to have you for a daughter. Every woman wants a daughter, you know!

Christina. You're being very nice to me, Mrs. Phelps.

Mrs. Phelps. It isn't at all hard to be nice to you, my dear. Tell me about your tour. You went to Sicily?

Christina. We did, indeed.

Mrs. Phelps. Sicily, the home of . . . [She gives herself up to Sicilian emotion] . . . of all those great ancient . . . poets and . . . poets. To think of your taking my boy to Sicily where I'd always planned to take him! I've never been, you see. How many opportunities we miss! That's what we're always saying of dead people, isn't it? Though, of course, I shouldn't think of calling David dead merely because he's got married. I do hope you read *Glorious Apollo* before you went to Venice. When I read it, I felt that I had made a new friend. I always make such close friends of my books, and, you know, there's no friend like a really good book. And there's nothing like a good historical novel to make a city vivid and interesting. They do bring things back to one. *Glorious Apollo*! What a despicable character that man Byron was! Though I daresay he couldn't have been as bad as he was painted. People do exaggerate so. Especially writers. Do you know *The Little Flowers of St. Francis*?

Christina. I'm afraid not. Are they exaggerated?

Mrs. Phelps. Well, of course, they're really fairy tales. Only to one with a profoundly religious point of view . . . and, if there's one thing I pride myself on it is my profoundly religious point of view . . . I always keep the *Little Flowers* on the table beside my bed. And read in them, you know? I quite brought Robin up on them. Dave never took to them. Though Dave loved his regular fairy tales. His Grimm and his Hans Christian. You read, I hope?

Christina. I can. I sometimes have to.

Mrs. Phelps. Oh, my dear, I only meant that I think it's so important, for David's

happiness, that you should be what I call "a reader." Both my boys learned their classics at their mother's knee. Their Scott and their Thackeray. And their Dickens. Lighter things too, of course. *Treasure Island* and *Little Lord Fauntleroy*. And you went to Prague, too. Dave wrote me from Prague. Such interesting letters, Dave writes! I wondered why you stayed so long in Prague.

Christina. It's a charming city, and an architect's paradise. Dave and I thought he ought to look at something besides cathedrals and temples. . . . There is domestic architecture, you know.

Mrs. Phelps. Yes. I suppose there is.

Christina. People do want houses. I'm inclined to think houses are more interesting than churches nowadays.

Mrs. Phelps. Oh, nowadays! I'm afraid I've very little use for nowadays. I've always thought it a pity that Dave and Rob couldn't have grown up in Italy in the Renaissance and known such men as . . . well, as Cellini.

Christina. I'm not sure Cellini would have been the ideal companion for a growing boy.

Mrs. Phelps. No? Well, perhaps not. I must certainly take in Prague my next trip abroad. It's really been very hard for me to stay home these last two years. But I said to myself: Dave must have his fling. I don't like mothers who keep their sons tied to their apron strings. I said: Dave will come home to me a complete man. Though I didn't actually look for his bringing you with him, my dear, and coming home a married man. Still . . . So I stayed home with Robin. And I was glad to. I'm not sure I haven't sometimes neglected Robin for David. Given myself too much to the one, not enough to the other. The first born, you know. We mothers are human, however much we may try not to be. Tell me, Christina, you think David is well, don't you?

Christina. Yes, perfectly.

Mrs. Phelps. He didn't seem quite himself just now.

Christina. Perhaps he was embarrassed.

Mrs. Phelps. With me? His own mother?

Christina. Wouldn't I have accounted for it?

Mrs. Phelps. How silly of me not to remember that! Tell me what your plans are

—if you have any plans, which I hope you haven't, because I've been making so many for you and such perfect ones.

Christina. Well, as a matter of fact, we haven't many, but what we have are pretty definite.

Mrs. Phelps. Really! Are they really? What are they?

Christina. Well, we're going to live in New York, of course.

Mrs. Phelps. Why "New York of course"? It seems to me that you might choose a pleasanter place to live than New York.

Christina. No doubt of that, Mrs. Phelps. But it does seem a good place for Dave to work and . . .

Mrs. Phelps. Oh, I can't agree with you!

Christina. I shouldn't have thought there could be two ways about New York for Dave any more than for me.

Mrs. Phelps. For you?

Christina. It's where my appointment is.

Mrs. Phelps. Your appointment?

Christina. At the Rockefeller Institute.

Mrs. Phelps. So that's what takes Dave and you to New York? Your geology.

Christina. Partly. Only it isn't geology. It's biology.

Mrs. Phelps. Of course. Geology's about rocks, isn't it?

Christina. Largely.

Mrs. Phelps. And biology?

Christina. Well—about Life.

Mrs. Phelps [getting it clear]. So you're a student of Life, my dear. I do wish David had called you that instead of the other.

Christina. I understand how you felt, Mrs. Phelps. I hope you don't hold my job against me.

Mrs. Phelps [with deep feeling]. My dearest Christina. I don't! Oh, if you thought that, I should be heart-broken. You've made my darling David happy, my dear, and for that I'm prepared to love everything about you. Even your job. Do you smoke?

Christina. Yes, thank you. May I?

Mrs. Phelps. Please. And I shall, too. . . .

[They light cigarettes]

Don't you like my lighter?

Christina. It's sweet. And very handy, I should think.

Mrs. Phelps. A friend sent it me from London. Let me give it to you.

Christina. Oh, no.

Mrs. Phelps. Please! I've not had a

chance yet to give my new daughter anything. My dearest Christina . . . please!

Christina. Thank you. I shall always keep it and use it.

Mrs. Phelps. I like the little ceremonial gift. . . . Now, about your job . . .

Christina. My job?

Mrs. Phelps. As you call it. I don't like to say "profession", because that has such a sinister sound for a woman. And then science is hardly a profession, is it? Rather more of a hobby. You're planning to continue?

Christina. With my job? Oh, yes.

Mrs. Phelps. Just as though you hadn't married, I mean?

Christina. I have to, don't I? To earn my right to call myself a biologist . . .

Mrs. Phelps. Do people call you that?

Christina. I guess they call me "doctor."

Mrs. Phelps. You're not a doctor?

Christina. Technically, I am.

Mrs. Phelps. Oh, I can never agree with you that women make good doctors!

Christina. We shan't have to argue that point. I've no intention of practicing.

Mrs. Phelps. Not at all? Above all, not on David?

Christina. I shouldn't think of it.

Mrs. Phelps. I remember hearing that doctors never do practice on their own families. I remember that when our doctor here had a baby . . . of course, his wife had the baby . . . he called in quite an outsider to deliver the child. I remember how that struck me at the time. Tell me more about yourself, my dear. When Dave cabled me about meeting you and marrying you so suddenly . . .

Christina. It wasn't so sudden, Mrs. Phelps. I spent a good six or seven months turning him down flat.

Mrs. Phelps [offended]. Indeed?

Christina. Dave and I met in Rome last winter. Then he came to Heidelberg, where I was working, and I accepted him. . . . I'd never given him the least encouragement before.

Mrs. Phelps [as before]. Indeed?

Christina. We were married straight off . . . and went to Sicily.

Mrs. Phelps. I didn't know about the preliminaries. Dave never told me. And now you're taking him off to New York!

Christina. Please don't put it that way.

Mrs. Phelps. I'm stating a fact, my dear

girl. After all, you *have* got your—[*She gets it right this time*] biology to think of.

Christina. You can't blame me for that, dear Mrs. Phelps, so long as I think of Dave's work, too.

Mrs. Phelps. No. . . . So long as you do that. . . . How did you come to select your career?

Christina. My father was a doctor. I grew up in his hospital. Everything followed quite naturally.

Mrs. Phelps. Your father—is he living?

Christina. He died two years ago. Tragically, but rather splendidly.

Mrs. Phelps. How?

Christina. He'd been experimenting for years on infantile paralysis and . . .

Mrs. Phelps. And he died of that?

[*CHRISTINA nods rather solemnly*]
Is your mother living?

Christina. Oh, yes; at home.

Mrs. Phelps. At home?

Christina. In Omaha.

Mrs. Phelps [*meditatively*]. Omaha . . .

Christina. Yes.

Mrs. Phelps. Hm . . . And you'll go on with your father's experiments?

Christina. Oh, no! That's not at all in my line.

Mrs. Phelps. What is your line?

Christina. It's hard to say. I did some rather hard work this last year at Heidelberg on the embryos of chickens. In the egg, you know.

Mrs. Phelps. For heaven's sake, what for?

Christina. Trying to find out something about what makes growth stop.

Mrs. Phelps. Why . . . ?

Christina. Curiosity, I guess. Now I'm admitting what low people we scientists are. I think that curiosity's all we have. And a little training.

Mrs. Phelps. Does David follow your work?

Christina. No. And I don't expect him to.

Mrs. Phelps. Quite right. David wouldn't be appealed to by rotten eggs. . . . Not that he couldn't understand them if they did appeal to him.

Christina. Of course.

Mrs. Phelps. Isn't the Rockefeller Institute one of those places where they practice vivisection?

Christina. One of many. Yes. . . .

Mrs. Phelps. Have you . . .

Christina. What?

Mrs. Phelps. Experimented on animals?

Christina. Isn't it a part of my job? Dave understands that. You must try to understand it.

Mrs. Phelps. Very well, I shall try, my dear. Now you must listen to me and try to understand me. . . . Look at me. What do you see? Simply—David's mother. I can't say of you that you're simply David's wife, because, clearly, you're many things beside that. But I am simply his mother. . . . I think, as I talk to you, that I belong to a dead age. I wonder if you think that? In my day, we considered a girl immensely courageous and independent who taught school or gave music lessons. Nowadays, girls sell real estate and become scientists and think nothing of it. Give us our due, Christina. We weren't entirely bustling and smelling salts, we girls who did not go into the world. We made a great profession which I fear may be in some danger of vanishing from the face of the earth. We made a profession of motherhood. That may sound old-fashioned to you. Believe me, it had its value. I was trained to be a wife that I might become a mother.

[*CHRISTINA is about to protest. Mrs.*

PHELPS stops her]

Your father died of his investigations of a dangerous disease. You called that splendid of him, didn't you? Would you say less of us who gave our lives to being mothers? Mothers of sons, particularly. Listen to me, Christina. David was five, Rob only a little baby, when my husband died. I'd been married six years, not so very happily. I was pretty, as a girl, too. Very pretty.

[*This thought holds her for a second*]

For twenty-four years, since my husband died, I've given all my life, all my strength to Dave and Rob. They've been my life and my job. They've taken the place of husband and friends both, for me. Where do I stand, now? Rob is marrying. Dave is married already. This is the end of my life and my job. . . . Oh, I'm not asking for credit or praise. I'm asking for something more substantial. I'm asking you, my dear, dear Christina, not to take all my boy's heart. Leave me, I beg you, a little, little part of it. I've earned that much. I'm not sure I couldn't say that you owe me that much—as David's mother. I believe I've deserved it. Don't you think I have?

Christina [deeply moved]. My dear, dear Mrs. Phelps!

Mrs. Phelps. It's agreed then, isn't it, that I'm not to be shut out?

Christina. Of course you're not!

Mrs. Phelps. Not by you, Christina. Nor by your work?

Christina. No! No!

Mrs. Phelps. Nor by anything?

Christina. You must know that I should never come between a mother and her son. You must know that I appreciate what you've done for Dave and all you've always been and meant to him. You *must* know that!

Mrs. Phelps. Christina, my dear, you're a very disarming person. You are indeed. I've known you ten minutes and unloaded my whole heart to you.

Christina. I'm proud that you trust me.

Mrs. Phelps [patting her hand]. Thank you, my dear. And now . . . now that you know how I feel . . . now you won't go to New York, will you? You won't take Dave to New York?

Christina [drawing back in alarm]. But, Mrs. Phelps!

Mrs. Phelps. Because that *would* be coming between mother and son, as you just now said. That could mean only one thing—crowding me out, setting me aside, robbing me. . . .

Christina [completely baffled]. You're quite mistaken, Mrs. Phelps! You've no reason to think any such thing!

Mrs. Phelps. Well, it's nice of you to reassure me, and we don't have to worry about it for some time yet. You'll have plenty of time to see how carefully I've worked everything out for David—and for you, too, my dear. You've a nice, long visit ahead, and . . .

Christina. I only wish we *had* a nice long visit, Mrs. Phelps.

Mrs. Phelps. What do you mean?

Christina. I start work at the Institute a week from tomorrow.

Mrs. Phelps [staggered]. What are you saying, child?

Christina. We didn't even bring our trunks up, you know.

Mrs. Phelps [recovering herself]. I'll not hear of it! A week of David after two years without him? What are you thinking of? Don't you realize that David has prac-

tically been my sole companion for nearly twenty-five years?

Christina. You've had Robert, too.

Mrs. Phelps. I'm not thinking so much of Robert, now. He isn't threatened as David is.

Christina. Threatened, Mrs. Phelps?

Mrs. Phelps. I don't want to see David's career sacrificed.

Christina. But I'm not planning to sacrifice it.

Mrs. Phelps. You make the word sound disagreeable. I admire your work, Christina, but I am very clearly of the impression that it may easily obliterate David's work.

Christina. I don't see any conflict.

Mrs. Phelps. Aren't you taking him to New York, which he simply loathes? To live in a stuffy tenement . . . well, an apartment. . . . They're the same thing. . . . Without proper heat or sunshine or food? I told you I'd made plans. I've arranged everything for David's best interest. I can't believe that a girl of your intelligence won't realize how good my arrangements are. I happen to own a very large tract of land here. A very beautiful tract, most desirable for residences. To the north of the Country Club just beside the links. Hilly and wooded. You can see it, off there to the left of the pond. I've had many offers for it, most advantageous offers. But I've held on to it, ever since Dave chose his profession. Pleasant Valley, it's called. I shall change the name to Phelps Manor, and open it. David will have charge. David will lay out the streets, design the gateways, build the houses and make his fortune, his reputation, and his place in the world out of it.

Christina [after a pause]. Don't you mean his place in this part of the world, Mrs. Phelps?

Mrs. Phelps [positively]. As well this as any. With me to back him, he's certain of a proper start here, and there can't be any doubt about the outcome. His success is assured here and his happiness and prosperity with it. And yours, too. Don't you see that?

Christina. It certainly sounds safe enough.

Mrs. Phelps. I knew you'd see. Furthermore, he's never happy in New York.

Christina. Happiness is very important.

Only different people have different ideas of it.

Mrs. Phelps. David's always had my ideas. And they're very sound ones.

Christina [politely]. I'm sure of it. But perhaps they aren't sound for David. I mean, from what I know of him. . . .

Mrs. Phelps. I'm David's mother, my dear. I know him better than you do.

Christina. I wonder!

Mrs. Phelps. Oh, I do! And I know how little New York has to offer. I know the competition there. I know what the struggle would be. Look at the choice. On the one hand obscurity, a desk in some other man's office, years of hack work and discouragement. On the other, immediate prominence, unquestionable success . . .

Christina. With his mother behind him.

Mrs. Phelps. Who better?

Christina. Oh, I see the difference!

Mrs. Phelps. Yes, don't you! And as to your work, my dear, I'm sure we can keep you busy and contented.

Christina [smiling in spite of herself]. How will you do that?

Mrs. Phelps. Well, it's hard to say, off-hand. But if we really set our minds to it. . . . I know! I'm the chairman of our hospital here, and I have a great deal of influence with the doctors. We've a beautiful laboratory. You couldn't ask for anything nicer or cleaner or more comfortable than that laboratory. You do your work in a laboratory, I suppose?

Christina. Usually.

Mrs. Phelps. I'll take you down in the morning and introduce you to Dr. McClintock, homeopathic, but very agreeable, and he'll show you our laboratory. We've just got in a new microscope, too. Oh, a very fine one! One the High School didn't want any more. You'll simply love our laboratory. Oh, you will! It has a splendid new sink with hot and cold running water and quite a good gas stove, because it's also the nurses' washroom and diet kitchen. And you'll be allowed to putter around as much as you like whenever it isn't in use by the nurses or the real doctors. I can arrange everything perfectly, my dear. I'm certain that, when you see our laboratory, you'll sit right down and write to Mr. Rockefeller, who, I'm told, is a very kind old man at heart, and won't misunderstand in the least, that you've found an opening

here that's ever so much more desirable than his old Institute, where you won't be obliged to cut up cats and dogs. You will think it over, won't you? Going to New York, I mean. Taking Dave to New York and ruining all his prospects?

Christina [after a pause, in all sincere kindness]. Mrs. Phelps, the third time I refused Dave, he asked me for a reason. I told him I couldn't throw myself away on a big frog in a small puddle.

Mrs. Phelps. You don't mean that you want him to be a small frog, a mere polliwog, in a great ocean like New York?

Christina. I'm afraid that's just what I do mean. And when he came back at me three months later with some real sketches and a great deal more humility and with a real job in a real architect's office . . .

Mrs. Phelps. Has David a job? In New York?

Christina. A chance anyway. With Michaels.

Mrs. Phelps. Michaels?

Christina. He's a big man. And he's interested in Dave.

Mrs. Phelps. I don't approve at all. I think it's madness.

Christina. You may be right. But, isn't it best left to Dave and me?

Mrs. Phelps [deeply hurt at the implication]. My dear Christina, if you think I'm trying to interfere, you're quite mistaken. You're very unfair. . . . Only tell me what makes you so sure Dave can succeed in New York.

Christina. I haven't given a thought to whether he'll succeed or not. That depends on his own talent, doesn't it? As to how much he makes, or how we get on, at first, I don't think that matters either . . . so long as Dave stands really on his own feet.

Mrs. Phelps. Oh, Christina, be honest with yourself. You are sacrificing David!

Christina. How?

Mrs. Phelps. By thinking only of yourself, of course.

Christina. Won't you believe that I'm thinking of both of us?

Mrs. Phelps. How can I? It's too bad of you, really. It means—in despair—it means that it's all been for nothing!

Christina. What has?

Mrs. Phelps [crescendo, as she walks about]. All, all that I've done for David and given up for him and meant to him!

Christina. How can you say that?

Mrs. Phelps. I did so want to be friendly with David's wife. If you knew how I've wished and dreamt and prayed for that!

Christina [*rising herself*]. But can't we be friends?

Mrs. Phelps. Some day you'll have a child of your own and then you may know what I mean, if . . .

Christina. If what?

Mrs. Phelps [*as a last volley*]. If you don't sacrifice your child, too, to this work of yours.

Christina [*deeply distressed*]. Mrs. Phelps, I wish you wouldn't feel that. It makes me feel that I've got off on a very wrong foot here. [ROBERT enters]

Robert. Christina!

Christina. Yes?

Robert. Dave says, if you want a bath before dinner, you'd better be quick about it.

Christina. I didn't know it was so late. Thanks. [*She goes to Mrs. Phelps*] You'll see that I do understand, dear Mrs. Phelps. You'll see that it all comes straight somehow and turns out for the best. Life takes care of such things. All we have to do is to keep out of life's way and make the best of things as *healthily* as possible.

Mrs. Phelps. You think I'm selfish.

Christina. Oh, no! I don't think anything of the sort!

Mrs. Phelps. Because if there's one thing I pride myself on,—I may have many faults,—but I am not selfish. I haven't a selfish hair in my head.

Christina. I tell you, I understand. [*She kisses her quickly and goes out*]

Robert [*looking curiously after CHRISTINA*]. Mother!

Mrs. Phelps [*wildly*]. Oh, Robin! I'm so lonely! So lonely!

Robert [*startled*]. Mother!

Mrs. Phelps. I'm afraid I'm a dreadful coward!

Robert. You, Mother?

Mrs. Phelps. I ought to have been prepared to lose my two great, splendid sons. I've told myself over and over again that the time would come, and now that it *has* come, I can't face it! She's taking Dave away to New York, away from me, away from all the wonderful plans I've made for him here!

Robert. Well, if Dave's fool enough to go!

Mrs. Phelps. I shouldn't do to any woman on earth what she's doing to me!

Robert. Of course you wouldn't. But then, Christina isn't your sort, is she?

Mrs. Phelps. You've noticed that, too?

Robert. Who is your sort, Mother? . . . Oh, it's a wonderful gift you've given us.

Mrs. Phelps. What's that, Robin?

Robert. A wonderful ideal of womanhood. You know what I mean.

Mrs. Phelps. No. What?

Robert. Your own marvellous self, Mother!

Mrs. Phelps. Dave didn't stop to think of any such ideal, did he?

Robert. Oh, Dave!

Mrs. Phelps. Perhaps I shouldn't be hurt. But you can't know what it is to be a mother. I nearly died when Dave was born. Hours and hours I suffered for him, trapped in agony. He was a twelve-pound baby, you know. If I could be sure of his happiness!

Robert. You mustn't ask too much.

Mrs. Phelps. You're right. No mother should expect any woman to love her son as she loves him.

Robert. Your sons don't expect any woman to love them as you do.

Mrs. Phelps. Oh, Robin! Is that how you feel?

Robert. I think it must be.

[*She looks at him, watching him think it all out*]

It's a funny business, isn't it? After a woman like you has suffered the tortures of the damned bringing us into the world, and worked like a slave to help us grow up in it, we can't wait to cut loose and give up the one thing we can be sure of! And for what? To run every known risk of disillusion and disappointment.

Mrs. Phelps [*struck by this*]. What is the one thing you can be sure of, Robin?

Robert. You are. Don't you know that? Why can't we leave well enough alone?

Mrs. Phelps. Presently you'll be going too, Rob.

Robert. Yes . . . I know I shall. . . . But nothing will ever come between us, Mother.

Mrs. Phelps. Come over here by the fire, Robin, and let's forget all these unpleasant things. [*She goes to sit by the*

fire] Let's have a real old-time talk about nothing at all. Sit down.

[*He sits as directed on a stool at her feet*]

Head in my lap! [*He obeys*]

So! This has shown me something I've always suspected. That you are *my* son. David takes after his father.

Robert. Mother!

Mrs. Phelps. Tell me, Robin, what you meant just now when you said that about the one thing you can be sure of. Did you mean that you've had dark thoughts about your future?

Robert. I must have meant something of the sort.

Mrs. Phelps. Hm. . . . It was dear of you, my great Robin, to say what you did about my being your ideal. You know my dream has always been to see my two boys married and settled down. But happily! Happily! Has Hester come to any decision about where she wants to spend her honeymoon?

Robert. Abroad.

Mrs. Phelps. Nothing more definite than just "abroad"?

Robert. No. She doesn't care where we go.

Mrs. Phelps. That seems very odd to me. I took such an interest in my honeymoon. Why, your father and I had every day of it planned, weeks before we were married. . . . Hester hasn't picked out her flat silver yet, either, has she?

Robert. I don't think so.

Mrs. Phelps. I can't understand it!

Robert. What?

Mrs. Phelps. Her indifference. It rather shocks me. [*She notices that ROBERT is shocked, too*] But I suppose I'm old-fashioned. Like this room. You must give me a little of your time and taste, Robin, before you're married, and advise me about doing this room over.

Robert [*eagerly*]. Have you come to that at last?

Mrs. Phelps. I'm afraid so. How's Hester planning to do your new home?

Robert [*his spirits subsiding at once*]. Oh, I don't know.

Mrs. Phelps. You don't mean to say she hasn't made *any* plans?

Robert. I've been trying to get her interested in house-hunting.

Mrs. Phelps. And she doesn't care about that either?

Robert. She says anything will suit her.

Mrs. Phelps. Does she, indeed! Most girls . . . most *normal* girls, that is, look forward so to having their homes to receive their friends in.

Robert. She leaves it all to me. She says I know much more about such things than she does.

Mrs. Phelps. How little she understands my poor Robin who ought never to be bothered!

Robert. Oh, well!

Mrs. Phelps. Do you happen to know if Hester *has* many friends? I mean, many men friends? Did she have lots of suitors beside you?

Robert. I daresay she had loads.

Mrs. Phelps. Do you *know* that she had?

Robert. She never told me so. Why?

Mrs. Phelps. I was wondering. She's been out two years. One does wonder how much a girl has been sought after. But, then, why should she have bothered with others when she thought she could land you? You are rather a catch, you know.

Robert. I, Mother?

Mrs. Phelps. Any girl would set her cap for you.

Robert. I don't believe Hester did that.

Mrs. Phelps. My dear, I wasn't saying that she did! But why shouldn't she? Only . . .

Robert. Only what?

Mrs. Phelps. I can't help wondering if Hester's feeling for you is as strong as you think it is. [*ROBERT wonders, too*] I've been wondering for some time, Robin. I've hesitated to speak to you about it. But after what you've just told me . . .

Robert. Well, it's too late to worry now.

Mrs. Phelps. I can't help worrying, though. Marriage is such an important step, and you're such a sensitive, shrinking character. It would be too terrible if you had to go through what you were just speaking of—the disillusionment and disappointment. . . . I'm only trying to find out what it is that's come between you two young people.

Robert. Nothing has, Mother. Hester isn't you, that's all!

Mrs. Phelps. Nonsense, Robin! . . . It isn't that awful woman I was so worried about when you were at Harvard?

Robert. I'm not raising a second crop of wild oats.

Mrs. Phelps. Then it *must* be that risk

you were speaking of! Oh, why do boys run that risk! Why will they break away!

Robert. I wish I knew!

Mrs. Phelps. Perhaps your trouble is that —[after a pause, very low] that you don't love Hester.

Robert. Oh, love! I must love her or I wouldn't have asked her to marry me. I guess she loves me in her way. Is her way enough? I'll find that out in time. A man ought to marry.

Mrs. Phelps [a little more positively]. You don't love Hester, and it isn't fair to her!

Robert. Yes, I do love her! Only I wonder if I'm the marrying kind. Failing the possibility of marrying you. I mean your double.

Mrs. Phelps [always increasing]. You don't love Hester.

Robert. I do, I tell you! Who could help loving her? I mean . . . Good God, what do I mean?

Mrs. Phelps. Either you don't love Hester or Hester doesn't love you.

Robert. She does love me.

Mrs. Phelps. She may say she does, but I haven't seen her showing it.

Robert. Mother!

Mrs. Phelps. You don't love Hester and Hester doesn't love you. It's as simple as that, Robin, and you're making a very grave mistake to go on with this. These things may be painful, but they're better faced before than after. Children come after, Robin, and then it's too late! Think, Robin! Think before it's too late! And remember, the happiness of three people is at stake!

Robert. Hester's and mine and . . .

Mrs. Phelps. And mine! And mine! . . . Only, I was wrong to say that! You must put my fate out of your mind just as Dave has done. Let Dave find out for himself what he's done. She won't be able to hold him. She won't have time for a home and children. She won't take any more interest in him than Hester takes in you. But you, Robin, you can still be saved! I want to save you from throwing yourself away as Dave has. You will face the facts, won't you?

Robert. You mean . . . I'm to . . . to break with Hester?

Mrs. Phelps. You will be a man?

Robert [after a pause]. Well . . . I'll . . . I'll try, Mother.

Mrs. Phelps [after a pause]. When?

Robert. Well . . . the . . . the first chance I get.

Mrs. Phelps [trying not to appear eager]. Tonight? . . . You'll have your chance to-night, Robin. I'll see that you get it. Promise me to take it?

Robert [after a pause]. All right. . . . If you think I'd better. . . . All right. . . .

Mrs. Phelps. Oh, thank God for this confidence between us! Thank God I've saved my boy one more tumble! You'll see it won't be so bad to put up with your mother a little longer! You'll see I've still plenty to give you and to do for you!

Robert. My blessed, blessed mother!

Mrs. Phelps [unable to repress her triumph]. And I won't have to be lonely now! I won't have to be lonely!

Robert. No, Mother! No! [He takes her in his arms]

Mrs. Phelps. Kiss me.

[He does; on the lips, fervently. DAVID comes in, dressed for dinner]

David. Hello! That's a pretty picture! . . . Chris'll be down in a minute.

Robert. Where's Hester?

David. In Chris's room. I heard them giggling in there. Isn't it grand they've hit it off so well?

Robert [meeting his mother's eyes]. Isn't it? I'll make a cocktail. [He goes]

David. You like Christina, don't you, Mother?

Mrs. Phelps. Didn't you know I should?

David. Sure I did! After all, I couldn't have gone far wrong on a wife, could I? I mean, having you for a mother would make most girls look pretty cheesy. I waited a long time. And all the time I was waiting for Chris! You'll see how wonderful Chris is. Why, she gets better every day. I don't know how I ever pulled it off. I swear I don't. I certainly had luck.

Mrs. Phelps. You're happy?

David. You bet I'm happy!

Mrs. Phelps. You're not going to let your happiness crowd me out entirely, are you, Dave, boy?

David [amiably irritated]. Oh, Mother! Lay off!

[ROBERT returns with shaker and cocktail glasses]

Robert. This is just a preliminary, Mother. We both need it, before we dress.

Mrs. Phelps. Perhaps we do.

David. Shan't we call Chris and Hester?

Mrs. Phelps. No! Just we three!

Robert. It'll never be we three any more. I heard them coming as I crossed the hall. [*He pours the cocktail into the glasses and goes about passing them*]

Mrs. Phelps. My two boys! My big one and my little one!

David [*calls out*]. Hurry up, Chris!

Mrs. Phelps. If I can keep the little corner Christina doesn't need, Dave . . . that's all I ask. . . .

David. Don't you worry, Mother.

[*CHRISTINA and HESTER enter. They are both dressed appropriately for the evening. CHRISTINA is particularly lovely*]

Here we are!

Christina. Thank you, Robert.

[*They sip their cocktails.*]

David. Chris!

Christina. Yes?

David. Let's tell Mother.

Christina. Now? In front of everybody?

David. It won't hurt 'em to hear.

Christina. I don't mind, if they don't.

Robert. Mind what?

David. It'll make Mother so happy.

Mrs. Phelps. What will?

David. A surprise Chris and I have got to spring on you!

Mrs. Phelps. How nice! What is it?

Christina [*a smiling pause—then*]. In about four months I'm going to have a baby!

Hester. Oh, Christina, how wonderful!

Robert. Are you really!

David. Isn't that a grand surprise, Mother?

Mrs. Phelps [*recovering as from a body blow*]. Of course . . . David, I'm very glad, my dear. Very glad. . . . Have you a napkin there, Robin? I've spilled my cocktail all over my dress.

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

The living-room again. It is the same evening, after supper. The lamps are lighted. MRS. PHELPS, HESTER, CHRISTINA, DAVID, and ROB are all present. CHRISTINA, HESTER,

and DAVID are dressed as we saw them at the end of the first act. ROB wears his dinner coat, and his mother has changed to a simple evening dress. They have only just finished their coffee, and MRS. PHELPS is busily showing a collection of photographs which she has in a great Indian basket beside her chair.

Christina. What were you doing in the sailor suit, Dave?

David. Dancing the hornpipe, I believe.

Mrs. Phelps [*fondly*]. That was at Miss Briggs's dancing school. Do you remember Miss Briggs, David?

David. Do I! The hornpipe must have been something special, Mother.

Mrs. Phelps. I see that I've marked it "Masonic Temple, April 6th, 1904."

David. It must have been special. They don't usually dance hornpipes in Masonic Temples.

Christina. Did Miss Briggs teach you to be graceful, Dave?

David. She did indeed. As a boy I was a gazelle. But I got over it.

Christina. I'm just as glad. I've known one or two adult gazelles.

Mrs. Phelps. Both David and Robin danced beautifully.

David. I haven't thought of Miss Briggs for years. I remember her so well. She seemed so old to me. She must have been old, too. A good deal older than God. She looked it, in spite of her red hair and her castanets. Spain, she used to say, is the land of the dance.

Mrs. Phelps. She had all the nicest children.

David. Castanets and Spanish shawls . . . and a police whistle. She blew the whistle at the boys for running and sliding. God knows what dances she taught us. Very different from the steps you indulge in, Hester, with your low modern tastes.

Hester. Running and sliding sounds very pleasant.

David. We thought that up for ourselves.

Mrs. Phelps. How long ago that all seems! [*She shows another photograph*] This is David when he was ten weeks old.

Christina. Oh, David!

Hester. Let me see.

[*CHRISTINA shows her*]
What a darling baby! Did they always sit them in shells in those days?

Mrs. Phelps [*just a little coldly*]. It was a fashion, like any other.

Christina. David on the half shell!

Hester. Have you ever noticed how much all babies look like Chief Justice Taft?

Mrs. Phelps [*taking the photographs back in ill-concealed irritation*]. David was a beautiful child.

David. I didn't always sit in shells. Mother's got one of me on a white fur rug.

Mrs. Phelps. It hangs over my bed to this day.

Christina. In the nude?

David. No. In an undershirt.

[HESTER giggles]

Mrs. Phelps. Fashions change.

Christina. I suppose they must. David wouldn't think of being photographed in his undershirt, now. Let me see the picture again, Mrs. Phelps.

Mrs. Phelps. I think that's enough for this evening. [*She rises, in great dignity, to put the photographs aside*]

Christina. Dear Mrs. Phelps, please don't be angry. We were only teasing David. They're awfully interesting pictures.

Mrs. Phelps. Only interesting to me, I'm afraid.

Christina. Not at all. I loved them. Do show me some more, Mrs. Phelps. Are there many more?

Mrs. Phelps [*still stern about them*]. Dave and Robin were photographed twice every month until they were twelve years old.

Hester [*calculating rapidly*]. Good Lord! That makes over two hundred and fifty of each!

Mrs. Phelps. I never counted. I used to study their photographs, month by month, just as I did their weight. I wasn't satisfied to watch only their bodies grow. I wanted a record of the development of their little minds and souls as well. I could compare the expression of Dave's eyes, for instance, at nine, with their expression at eight and a half, and see the increased depth. And I was never disappointed.

Hester. I knew a mother once who called her son "her beautiful black swan".

Mrs. Phelps. I should never have called either of my sons by such a name!

Robert. I can remember when you used to call us your Arab steeds!

Mrs. Phelps [*furiously*]. Only in fun. Will you put them away, Robin?

[ROBERT takes the photographs]

Robert. Sure you don't want to go through the rest, Mother?

Mrs. Phelps. I'm afraid of boring Christina. Christina has other interests, of course. Higher interests than her husband. Higher even than children, I suspect.

[*There is an abashed, awful pause, at this. CHRISTINA looks hurt and baffled. HESTER is horrified. DAVID, puzzled, rises and goes to the window. ROBERT smiles to himself as he stows the photographs away*]

Hester [*breaking out*]. Well, of all the

... [CHRISTINA, catching her eye, stops her]

Mrs. Phelps [*polite, but dangerous*]. What was it you were about to say, Hester?

Hester [*recovering herself none too expertly*]. I was just looking at Christina's dress. I was just going to say: "Well, of all the lovely dresses I ever saw, that's the loveliest."

Christina. It is nice, isn't it? I got it in Paris. From Poiret. Dave made me.

Mrs. Phelps [*as she studies the dress*]. I've a little woman right here in town who does well enough for me. I know who that dress *would* look well on! Dave, you remember Clara Judd? Such an exquisite figure, Clara had, and such distinction! That dress *wants* distinction and a figure. You might wear it, too, Hester.

[*There is another painful pause. CHRISTINA is really crushed*]

David [*desperately snatching for a change of subject*]. Look, Chris! The moon's up. You can see the kids coasting down the long hill.

Christina [*joining him at the window gratefully*]. If I weren't all dressed up, I'd join them!

Hester. Don't you love coasting?

Christina [*nodding*]. Once last winter we had a big snowfall at Heidelberg. I'd been all day in the laboratory, I remember, straining my eyes out at a scarlet fever culture for our bacteriology man. Krauss, his name was. They called him "The Demon of the Neckar." The theory was that he used to walk along the river bank, thinking up cruel things to say to his students. I never knew such a terrifying man. . . . Well, this day I'm talking about, I came out of Krauss's laboratory into the snow. Into

Grimm's fairy tales, as Dave knows, because Dave's seen Heidelberg. Another bacteriologist, a dear boy from Marburg, came with me. We looked at the snow, and we wanted to coast. . . . We found a small boy with a very large sled and we rented it, *with* the boy, who wouldn't trust us not to steal it. We certainly coasted. We got so ardent, we took the funicular up the Schlossberg and coasted down from there. The lights came out along the Neckar, and the snow turned the colors and colors snow can turn and still we coasted. . . . Presently, we had an accident. A bob turned over in front of us with an old man on it. We couldn't stop, and so we just hit the bob and the old man, and you know how that is when you're going fast! . . . We picked ourselves up—or, rather, dug ourselves out—and went to see if we'd hurt the old fellow, and, God save us, it was Krauss himself! . . . I don't mind telling you our hearts sank. We stood there petrified. But we needn't have worried. Krauss didn't mind. He smiled the sweetest smile—you'd *never* have suspected he had it in him!—and touched his cap like a little boy and apologized for his clumsiness. "My age hasn't improved my skill," he said. . . . I could have kissed him. I wasn't quite sure how he'd have taken that, so, instead, I asked him to join us. He was delighted. We kept it up for another hour, we two students and the great god Krauss. "Jugend ist Trunkenheit ohne Wein!" he said. I daresay he was quoting a poem. . . . He couldn't have been a day under seventy. Three months later, he died of an inoperable internal tumor. In his notes, they found an observation he had written on his condition that very day we coasted. Think of a man who could write observations on his approaching death and then go off to coast afterwards! It's what life can be and should be. It's the difference between life and self.

Mrs. Phelps. Hm! . . .

Hester. I think that's the most marvellous story I've ever heard!

Robert. Isn't it marvellous?

Hester. I wish I'd known such a man!

Christina. Do you remember the night we coasted in Heidelberg, Dave?

David. Do I? [*To his mother*] Chris means the night she accepted me!

Mrs. Phelps. Does she really?

David [*dashed, and giving it up*]. Yeah.

. . . Let's go outside and watch the kids, Chris. It'll do us good.

Christina [*seeing his point*]. Right! I'd love to!

[*They go*]

Mrs. Phelps. I'm beginning to wonder if Christina's studies at Heidelberg haven't made her just the least little bit in the world pro-German.

Hester. Mrs. Phelps, how can you say such a thing!

[*Hester looks from ROBERT to his mother in amazement. MRS. PHELPS sits down at the piano and begins to play the easier portions of one of Chopin's nocturnes*]

I think that was simply inspiring!

Mrs. Phelps. I can't play Chopin if you interrupt me, Hester.

Hester. I'm sorry. I simply can't get Christina out of my mind.

Mrs. Phelps. What do you mean?

Hester. I mean that I think she's the most perfect person I've ever seen.

Mrs. Phelps. Do you really? Which way did they go, Robin?

Robert [*at the window*]. Down the front.

Mrs. Phelps. Can you see them?

Robert. They're just standing in the road. Now they're moving down under the trees.

Mrs. Phelps. But they can't even *see* the long hill from the trees.

Robert. They're not looking at the long hill.

Mrs. Phelps. What are they looking at?

Robert. Each other. It's quite a romantic picture. Now she's put her head on his shoulder. His arm is around her waist. . . .

Mrs. Phelps. Faugh! Call them in!

[*Her irritation produces a discord in the nocturne. ROBERT moves to go*]

Hester. Oh, don't, Rob! It's the first chance they've had to be alone together.

Mrs. Phelps. They can be alone without David's catching pneumonia, can't they? She drags him out of doors at night in freezing weather to spoon in the road like a couple of mill hands! I should think she might have some consideration for her husband's health, let alone for my feelings.

Hester [*a little hotly*]. In the first place, it was David who dragged *her* out. In the second, they *are* in love and *do* want to be alone. In the third, I don't see any reason for worrying over the health of any man who looks as husky as David does. And in

the fourth, if there is any worrying to be done, let me remind you that it's Christina and not David who is going to have a baby.

[MRS. PHELPS breaks off her playing in the middle of a phrase]

I'm sorry if I've shocked you, but the truth is, you've both shocked me.

Robert. How have we shocked you?

Hester. By not being a great deal more thrilled over Christina's baby. When I drank my cocktail to it before dinner, neither of you drank yours. When I wanted to talk about it during dinner, you both changed the subject. You haven't mentioned that baby since dinner, except once, and that was catty! You've known about that baby for over two hours and you aren't excited about it yet! Not what I call excited.

Mrs. Phelps. If you'll forgive my saying so, Hester, I'm not sure that an unborn baby is quite the most suitable subject for . . .

Hester. I'm blessed if I see anything bad form about a baby!

Robert. No more does Mother—after it's born.

Hester. I can't wait for that. I love thinking about them. And wondering what they're going to be—I mean, boy or girl. Why, we had bets up on my sister's baby for months before he was born.

Mrs. Phelps. I'm not ashamed to be old-fashioned.

Hester. You ought to be. This is going to be a very remarkable baby. There aren't many born with such parents. And I intend to go right on talking about it with anyone who'll listen to me. Christina doesn't mind. She's just as interested as I am. I've already made her promise to have my sister's obstetrician.

Mrs. Phelps. Really, Hester!

Hester. I'd go to the ends of the earth for that man. Christina's baby has put me in a very maternal frame of mind.

Mrs. Phelps. Maternal!

Hester. What I say is: I'm as good as married. I might as well make the best of my opportunities to get used to the idea. Because I intend to have as many babies as possible.

Mrs. Phelps [glancing at Robert]. Is that why you're marrying Rob, Hester?

Hester. What better reason could I have? I'm sorry if I've shocked you, but, as I

said before, you've shocked me, and that's that.

[Coolly, MRS. PHELPS goes for the coffee tray. Her eyes meet ROBERT's, and there is no mistaking the intention of the look they give him. Then, without a word, she leaves ROBERT and HESTER alone together]

Robert [starting after her]. Mother! . . . Hester didn't mean. . . Oh. . . [He turns back to HESTER] Hester, how could you?

Hester I don't know. . . But I don't care if I did!

Robert. It doesn't make things any easier for me.

Hester. Oh, Rob, dear, I am sorry!

Robert. You've got Mother all ruffled and upset. Now we'll have to smooth her down and have all kinds of explanations and everything. Really, it was too bad of you.

Hester. I know. I lost my temper. . . You understand, don't you?

Robert. I understand that you're a guest in Mother's house.

Hester. Is that all you understand? Oh, Rob!

Robert. I'm sorry, Hester. But, for the moment, I'm thinking of Mother.

Hester. I see. . . I'll apologize.

Robert. That's up to you.

Hester. I suppose she'll never forgive me. It isn't this, though.

Robert. This?

Hester. The scene I made.

Robert. What do you mean?

Hester. I don't know. . . Some mothers like the girls their sons marry.

Robert. Doesn't that depend on the girls?

Hester. Not entirely.

Robert. You mustn't be unjust to Mother.

Hester. Rob, I'm a little tired of hearing about your mother. . . [Suddenly penitent again] Oh, I didn't mean to say that! I didn't mean it a bit! I'm sorry, Rob. . . Now I'm apologizing to you. Don't you hear me?

Robert. Yes, I hear you. What then?

Hester. Oh, what difference does it make? I'm not marrying your mother. I'm marrying you. And I love you, Rob! I love you!

Robert. Yes, my dear.

Hester. I'll never be bad again.

Robert. I'm willing to take your word for it.

Hester. You'd better be. Oh, you are angry with me, Rob!

Robert. No. I'm not.

Hester. You're a queer one.

Robert. Think so? How?

Hester. As a lover. I've never seen another like you.

Robert. Haven't you? [*A thought strikes him*] Tell me something, Hester.

Hester. What?

Robert. Have you had many?

Hester. Many what?

Robert. Lovers.

Hester. Oh, Robert, what a thing to say to a lady!

Robert. You know what I mean.

Hester. I'm not quite sure I want to answer.

Robert. I'm not asking for their names.

Hester. Oh, I shouldn't mind that . . . the truth is . . . I don't know . . .

Robert. You must.

Hester. I don't really. I used to think . . . oh, quite often . . . that one of my beaux was coming to the point . . . but . . .

Robert. Yes?

Hester. But none of them ever did.

Robert. That surprises me. Why not?

Hester. I don't think it was entirely lack of allure. Rob.

Robert. Of course it wasn't!

Hester. I think it was because I always laughed.

Robert. You didn't laugh at me.

Hester. You looked foolish enough, now that I think of it.

Robert. Yes. I daresay. . . . So I was the only one.

Hester. Say the only one I didn't laugh at, please. You make me sound so undesirable.

Robert. I didn't mean to. Tell me, Hester . . .

Hester. Anything.

Robert. Have you thought what it will mean to be my wife?

Hester. A very pleasant life.

Robert. For you?

Hester. I certainly hope so.

Robert. I don't know that I quite share your enthusiasm for children.

Hester. You will.

Robert. They don't exactly help a career, you know.

Hester. Have you got a career?

Robert. I fully intend to have one.

Hester. I'm glad to hear it.

Robert. I've got just as much talent as Dave has.

Hester. What kind of talent?

Robert. I haven't decided. I can draw pretty well. I'm not a bad musician. I might decide to compose. I might even write. I've often thought of it. And children, you see . . .

Hester. I don't know much about careers, but Lincoln had children and adored 'em, and if you can do half as well as he did . . .

Robert. Then my preferences aren't to be considered?

Hester. You just leave things to me. If we're poor, I'll cook and scrub floors. I'll bring up our children. I'll take care of you whether we live in New York or Kamchatka. This business is up to me, Rob. Don't let it worry you.

Robert [*crushed*]. I only wanted to make sure you understood my point of view.

Hester. If I don't, I shall, so let's cut this short.

[*She goes a little huffily to the window, ROBERT watching her uneasily*]

Hello!

Robert. What is it?

Hester. There goes your mother down the road.

Robert [*joining her*]. So it is! What can she be doing?

Hester. She's fetching her darling David in out of the cold. I knew she would.

Robert. Hester, would you mind not speaking that way of Mother?

Hester. Can't she leave them alone for a minute?

Robert. She's the worrying kind.

Hester. Oh, rot!

Robert. Evidently you're bent on making things as difficult as possible for me.

Hester. I'm sorry you feel that.

[*A long irritable pause*]

Robert. Hester?

Hester. Yes?

Robert. Have you thought any more about our honeymoon?

Hester. Didn't we decide to go abroad?

Robert. Abroad's a pretty general term. You were to think *where* you wanted to be taken.

Hester. I left that to you.

Robert. You said you "didn't care."

Hester. I don't.

Robert. Nor where we live after . . . nor how.

Hester. I don't . . . I don't . . . I want to live with you. [*Suddenly warming*] What's the use of this, Rob?

Robert. We've never talked seriously about our marriage before.

Hester. What is there to say about it?

Robert. A great deal.

Hester. I don't agree. Marriages are things of feeling. They'd better *not* be talked about.

Robert. Real marriages can stand discussion!

Hester. Rob!

Robert. What?

Hester. That wasn't nice.

Robert. Wasn't it?

Hester [*suddenly frightened*]. What's the matter, Rob? I'll talk as seriously as you please. Do I love you? Yes. Am I going to make you a good wife? I hope so, though I *am* only twenty and may make mistakes. Are you going to be happy with me? I hope that, too, but you'll have to answer it for yourself.

Robert. I can't answer it.

Hester. Why can't you?

Robert. Because I'm not sure of it.

Hester. Aren't you, Rob?

Robert. These things are better faced before than after.

Hester. What is it you're trying to say?

Robert. If only we could be sure!

Hester [*stunned*]. So that's it!

Robert. Are you so sure you want to marry me?

Hester. How can I be—now?

Robert. Marriage is such a serious thing. You don't realize how serious.

Hester. Don't I?

Robert. No. . . . I hope you won't think harshly of me. . . . And, mind you, I haven't said I wanted to break things off. . . . I only want . . .

Hester. Please, Rob!

Robert. No. You've got to hear me out.

Hester. I've heard enough, thank you!

Robert. I'm only trying to look at this thing . . .

Hester. Seriously. . . . I know. . . .

Robert. Because, after all, the happiness of three people is affected by it.

Hester. Three?

Robert. As Mother said, before dinner.

Hester. So you talked this over with your mother?

Robert. Isn't that natural?

Hester. Is your mother the third?

Robert. Wouldn't she be?

Hester. Yes, I suppose she would. . . . I think you might tell me what else she had to say.

Robert. It was all wise and kind. You may be as hard as you like on me, but you mustn't be hard on poor splendid lonely Mother.

Hester [*savage—under her breath*]. So she's lonely, too!

Robert. You *will* twist my meaning!

Hester. You *said* "lonely".

Robert. Perhaps I did. But Mother didn't. You know, she never talks about herself.

Hester. I see. What else did she say about us?

Robert. Well, you haven't been very interested in planning our future. She notices such things.

Hester. What else?

Robert. She sees through people, you know.

Hester. Through me?

Robert. She thought, as I must say I do, that we didn't love each other quite enough to . . . At least, she thought we ought to think very carefully before we . . .

Hester [*gripping his two arms with all her strength, and stopping him*]. If you really want to be free . . . if you really want that, Rob, it's all right. It's perfectly all right. . . . I'll set you free. . . . Don't worry. . . . Only you've got to say so. You've got to. . . . Answer me, Rob. Do you want to be rid of me?

[*There is a pause. ROBERT cannot hold her gaze, and his eyes fall. She takes the blow*]

I guess that's answer enough. [*She draws a little back from him and pulls the engagement ring from her finger*] Here's your ring.

Robert. Hester! Don't do anything you'll be sorry for afterwards! Don't, please! I can't take it yet!

Hester [*without any sign of emotion, dropping the ring on a table*]. I shall have an easier time of it, if you keep away from me. I want to save my face . . . if I can.

Robert. Hester, please!

Hester. All right, if you won't go, I will.

Robert. I'm sorry. Of course I'll go.

Hester. And take your ring with you.

[He goes to the table, picks up the ring, pockets it, and has just got to the door when HESTER breaks into furious, hysterical sobbing. Her sobs rack her and seem, at the same time, to strike ROBERT like the blows of a whip]

Robert. For God's sake, Hester. . . .

[She drops into a chair and sits, staring straight before her, shaken by her sobs of outraged fury and wretchedness]

Mother! Christina! Come here! Hester. . .

[CHRISTINA appears in the door. MRS.

PHELPS follows her. DAVID appears.

ROBERT returns to HESTER]

Can't you pull yourself together?

[She motions him away]

Christina. What's the matter?

Robert. It's Hester. Can't you stop her?

Mrs. Phelps. Good heavens, Robin!

What's wrong with the child?

Robert. She's . . . upset . . . you see, I was just . . . you know . . .

Mrs. Phelps. I see! . . . She's taking it badly.

[HESTER's sobs only increase]

Christina. Hester, stop it!

Hester. I'm all right. . . . I can't . . . I

. . . Christina . . . please . . .

Christina. Open a window, Dave. . . .

Haven't you any smelling salts in the house, Mrs. Phelps?

[MRS. PHELPS goes for them where she left them at teatime]

Hester. Tell Rob to go away! Tell Rob to go away!

Christina. Never mind Rob! . . . Get me some aromatic spirits, one of you! Hurry up!

[ROBERT goes]

Mrs. Phelps. Here are my salts.

Christina [peremptorily]. Hester! [She holds the salts for HESTER to smell]. Now, stop it! Stop it, do you hear me?

Hester. I'm trying to stop. If you'd only send these awful people out! Take me away, Christina! Take me back to New York! I've got to get away from here. I can't face them! I can't! I can't!

Christina. Now, stop it!

David [coming forward from a window]. Here's some snow in my handkerchief. Rub it on her wrists and temples.

Christina. Thanks, Dave.

[She applies it. HESTER, by dint of great

effort, gradually overcomes her sobs. ROBERT returns with a tumbler partly filled with a milky solution of aromatic spirits]

Mrs. Phelps [speaking at the same time, in unfeigned wonderment to DAVID]. Really, I do wonder at what happens to girls nowadays! When I was Hester's age, I danced less and saved a little of my strength for self-control.

Robert [speaking through]. Here, Dave. Take this.

[DAVID takes it. ROBERT goes again. DAVID gives the tumbler to CHRISTINA]

Christina. Good! Can you drink this now, Hester?

Hester. Thank you, Christina. I'm all right now. It was only . . .

Christina. Never mind what it was. Drink this. [HESTER drinks it] There, now. That's better. Just sit still and relax.

David. What on earth brought it on?

Mrs. Phelps [shrugging her shoulders]. Rob and she must have had a falling out.

David. No ordinary one. . . . Rob! He's gone. . . . That's funny.

Mrs. Phelps. He'd naturally be distressed.

Hester. I'm really all right, now, Christina . . . and frightfully ashamed. . . .

Mrs. Phelps. You'd better see how Rob is, Dave. His nerves are none too stout. Such scenes aren't good for him.

Hester [in a high, strained voice]. No, isn't that so, Mrs. Phelps?

Mrs. Phelps. Did you speak to me, Hester?

Hester. Take the smelling salts to Rob with my love. . . . Oh God, Christina!

Christina. Now, never mind, Hester. You'll go to pieces again.

Hester. But I've got to mind! And I'm all right! It won't hurt me. . . . I wish you'd go, David.

Christina. Yes, Dave, do. I'll come up in a jiffy.

Mrs. Phelps. When Hester's quieted down. [To DAVID] We'd better both go and see how Rob is. [She starts to go]

Hester. Mrs. Phelps. There's something I want to ask you before we part.

Mrs. Phelps. To-morrow, my dear girl. . . .

Hester. There isn't going to be any to-morrow.

Mrs. Phelps. What?

Hester. Rob has just broken our engagement.

Mrs. Phelps. Not really!

Christina [staggered]. Hester, what do you mean?

Hester. I mean what I say. Rob's just broken our engagement.

[CHRISTINA motions to DAVE to go. He obeys]

Mrs. Phelps. I'm immensely distressed, of course.

Hester [shaking her head doggedly]. He talked it all over with you before dinner. He told me that much, so it won't do you the least bit of good to pretend to be surprised.

Mrs. Phelps. Aren't you forgetting yourself, Hester?

Hester. You made him do it. Why did you make him do it, Mrs. Phelps?

[CHRISTINA, amazed, draws back to observe the pair of them]

Mrs. Phelps [with perfect dignity]. I don't intend to stand here, Hester, and allow any hysterical girl to be rude to me.

Hester [driving on querulously]. I'm not being rude! All I want to know is why you talked Rob into jilting me. Will you answer me, please?

Mrs. Phelps. Such things may be painful, my dear girl, but they're far less painful before than after.

Hester. He quoted that much.

Christina. What's the good of this, Hester?

Hester. I'm only trying to make her tell me why she did it.

Mrs. Phelps. But, Hester! Really! This is absurd!

Hester. You've got to! You've got to explain!

Mrs. Phelps. I had nothing to do with Robin's change of heart.

Hester. You must have had, Mrs. Phelps, and I'm demanding an explanation of why you talked Rob into . . .

Mrs. Phelps. Isn't it enough that he found out in time that you weren't the wife for him?

Hester. That isn't the truth!

Christina. Hester, darling!

Hester. Can you tell me what he meant when he said that the happiness of three people was at stake?

Mrs. Phelps. He must have been think-

ing of your happiness as well as his own and mine.

Hester. What about your loneliness?

Mrs. Phelps. This is contemptible of you!

Christina. Really, Hester, this *can't* do any good!

Hester. I'm going to make her admit that she made Rob . . .

Mrs. Phelps [exploding]. Very well, then, since you insist! I did advise my son to break with you. Do you want to know why?

Hester. Yes!

Mrs. Phelps. Because of your indifference.

. . .

Hester. Oh!

Mrs. Phelps. Because he came to me to say that you neither love him nor make any pretense of loving him . . .

Hester. Rob said that?

Mrs. Phelps. He even said that you must have misconstrued his friendship and that he never wanted to marry you . . .

Hester. No!

Mrs. Phelps. And I told him to risk anything . . . anything, rather than such an appalling marriage . . .

Hester. I don't believe a word of it!

Mrs. Phelps. You may believe it or not!

Christina. Mrs. Phelps, you had really better let me handle this.

Mrs. Phelps. Willingly.

Hester. Do you believe I took advantage of Rob, Christina?

Christina. Of course not!

Mrs. Phelps. So you take her side, Christina!

Christina. I don't believe *that*, Mrs. Phelps.

Mrs. Phelps [realizing that she has gone too far]. No? Well, perhaps . . .

Christina. Whatever Robert may think, I can't believe that he said . . .

Mrs. Phelps [frightened]. Perhaps he didn't say quite that, in so many words . . . but he certainly meant . . .

Hester. I'm going. I'm going now. Right this minute.

Mrs. Phelps. There's a train at nine in the morning. It gets you to New York at twelve. I shall have the car for you at eight-thirty.

Hester. May I have the car now, please, Mrs. Phelps?

Mrs. Phelps. There's no train to-night.

Hester. It doesn't matter. I won't stay

here. Not another minute. I'll go to the hotel in town.

Mrs. Phelps. You'll do nothing of the sort!

Hester. You see if I don't!

Mrs. Phelps. You've got to think of appearances!

Hester. Appearances are your concern. Yours and Rob's. I'm going to the hotel. I don't care what people say! I don't care about anything. I won't stay here!

Mrs. Phelps. Can't you talk to her, Christina? Surely you see . . . for all our sakes!

Hester. If you won't let me have the car, I'll call a taxi. . . . [*She plunges towards the telephone*]

Mrs. Phelps. I forbid you!

Hester [*seizing the instrument*]. I want a taxi . . . a taxi. . . . What is the number? . . . Well, give it to me. . . . Locust 4000? Give me Locust 4000!

[*MRS. PHELPS hesitates an instant, then, with terrible coolness, steps forward and jerks the telephone cord from the wall. Except for a startled exclamation, very low, from CHRISTINA, there is not a sound. HESTER hangs up the receiver and sets down the dead instrument*]

Mrs. Phelps [*after an interminable silence*]. You are the only person in the world who has ever forced me to do an undignified thing. I shall not forget it. [*She goes nobly*]

Hester [*weakly, turning to CHRISTINA*]. Christina, it isn't true what she said. . . . He did. . . . He did want to marry me! Really, he did! He did!

Christina. Of course he did, darling!

Hester. I won't stay! I won't stay under that woman's roof!

Christina. Hester, darling!

Hester. I'll walk to town!

Christina. Don't, Hester!

Hester. That wasn't true, what she said!

Christina. Of course not!

Hester. I still love him. . . . Let me go, Christina, I'll walk . . .

Christina. You can't, at this time of night! It wouldn't be safe!

Hester. I don't care! I won't stay!

Christina. There! There! You'll come to bed now, won't you!

Hester. No! No! I can't! I'd rather die! I'll walk to town.

Christina. You'll force me to come with you, Hester. I can't let you go alone.

Hester. I won't stay another minute!

Christina. Do you want to make me walk with you? Think, Hester! Think what I told you before dinner! Do you want to make me walk all that way in the cold?

Hester [*lashed by this*]. Oh, your baby! I didn't mean to forget your baby! Oh, Christina, you mustn't stay, either! This is a dreadful house! You've got to get your baby away from this house, Christina! Awful things happen here!

Christina. Hester, darling! Won't you please be sensible and come up to bed?

Hester [*speaking at the same time, as her nerves begin to go again*]. Awful things, Christina. . . . You'll see if you don't come away! You'll see! . . . She'll do the same thing to you that she's done to me. You'll see! You'll see!

SCENE TWO

The curtain rises again, as soon as possible, upon DAVID's little bedroom, untouched since the day when DAVID went away to Harvard and scorned to take his prep school trophies and souvenirs with him. The furniture is rather more than simple. The bed is single. There is a dresser. There are only a couple of chairs. The curtains at the single window have been freshly laundered and put back in their old state by MRS. PHELPS in a spirit of maternal archeology. Insignificant loving cups, won at tennis, stand about the dresser. No pennants, no banners. There might be some tennis racquets, golf sticks, crossed skis, a pair of snow-shoes, class photographs and framed diplomas. There must also be a fairly important reproduction of Velasquez' Don Balthazar Carlos on horseback, selected by MRS. PHELPS as DAVID's favorite Old Master. A final touch is DAVID's baby pillow.

DAVID stands in his pajamas and socks, about to enter upon the last stages of his preparations to retire for the night. The room has been strewn with clothing during the preliminary stages. Now he is in the ambulatory state of mind. A series of crosses and circumnavigations produces several empty packs of cigarettes from several pockets, corners of the suitcase, etc. This frustration brings on baffled scratchings of

the head and legs. Then he gives up the cigarette problem, turns again to the suitcase, spills several dirty shirts and finally, apparently from the very bottom, extracts a dressing-gown, a pair of slippers, a tooth-brush, and some tooth-paste. He sheds the socks, dons the slippers and dressing-gown, and sallies forth with brush and paste to do up his teeth in the bathroom. He goes by the door which gives on the hall at the head of the stairs.

After he has been gone a few seconds, a tiny scratching sound is heard on the other side of the other door to the room and that is opened from without. We see the scratcher at work, conveying the impression that a wee mouse wants to come in. The wee mouse is none other than MRS. PHELPS, all smiles in her best negligée, the most effective garment she wears in the course of the entire play, carrying a large eiderdown comfort.

The smile fades a little when she discovers that the room is empty. Then its untidiness catches her eye and she shakes her head reprovingly, as who should say: "What creatures these big boys are!" She goes to work at once, true mother that she is, to pick things up. She loves her work and puts her whole heart into it. The trousers are neatly hung over the back of the chair, the coat and waistcoat hung over them. The shirts, socks, and underwear are folded and laid chastely on the seat. One or two of the garments receive devout maternal kisses and hugs. Then she goes to the bed, lifts off the suitcase, pushes it underneath, adjusts the eiderdown, smooths the pillow and kisses that. Last, all smiles again, she sits, carefully disposing her laces and ribbons, to await DAVID's return. She yearns for it, and she has not long to wait.

DAVID returns. His mother's beaming smile, as he opens the door, arouses his usual distaste for filial sentimentality. It is intensified, now—and very ill-concealed—by the hour, his costume, and recent events. He hesitates in the doorway.]

Mrs. Phelps. Why do you look so startled? It's only Mother!

David [laconically]. Hello, Mother!

Mrs. Phelps. I came in to ask if you needed anything and . . .

David. Not a thing, thanks.

Mrs. Phelps. And to warn you against

opening the window in this weather. Oh, and I brought you that extra cover. I've been picking up after you, too!

David [looking gloomily about]. You needn't have troubled.

Mrs. Phelps. It took me back to the old days when I used to tuck you up in that same little bed . . .

David [as a strong hint]. Yeah. . . . I'm just turning in, Mother.

Mrs. Phelps [regardless]. . . . And then sit in this very chair and talk over all my problems with you. I feel that I must talk to my big boy tonight. . . . I must get acquainted with my Dave again.

David [as an even stronger hint]. We're not exactly strangers, are we? And besides, it's getting late.

Mrs. Phelps [even more persistent]. It was always in these late hours that we had our talks in the old days when we were still comrades. Oh, are those days gone forever? Don't you remember how we used to play that we had an imaginary kingdom where we were king and queen?

David [moribund]. Did we? I wish Chris 'ud come up.

Mrs. Phelps [with a frown and speaking quickly]. Have you noticed, Dave, boy, that your room is just as you left it? I've made a little shrine of it. The same curtains, the same . . .

David [breaking in]. I suppose Chris is still trying to get Hester quiet?

Mrs. Phelps. I suppose so. . . . And every day I dusted in here myself and every night I prayed in here for . . .

David [a little too dryly for good manners]. Thanks.

Mrs. Phelps [reproachfully]. Oh, David, you can't get that horrid scene downstairs out of your mind!

David. No.

Mrs. Phelps. Try! I need my big boy so! Because I'm facing the gravest problem of my life, Dave. And you've got to help me.

David. What is it?

Mrs. Phelps. Is it true that I'm of no more use to my two sons?

David. Whatever put such an idea in your head?

Mrs. Phelps. You did.

David [shocked]. I?

Mrs. Phelps [nodding]. You weren't really glad to see me this afternoon.

David [in all sincerity]. I was. . . I was delighted!

Mrs. Phelps [bravely stopping him]. Not glad as I was to see you. I noticed, Dave! . . . And that made me wonder whether this scientific age—because it is a scientific age, Dave—isn't making more than one boy forget that the bond between mother and son is the strongest bond on earth. . . .

David [not quite sure of the superlative]. Well, it's certainly strong.

Mrs. Phelps. Do you realize how sinful any boy would be to want to loosen it?

David. Sure I realize that!

Mrs. Phelps. I see so many poor mothers, no less deserving of love and loyalty than I, neglected and discarded by their children, set aside for other interests.

David. What interests?

Mrs. Phelps. All kinds of things. . . . Wives. . . .

David [shying]. Nonsense, Mother!

Mrs. Phelps. The Chinese never set any relationship above their filial piety. They'd be the greatest people on earth if only they'd stop smoking opium.

David. You haven't any kick, have you? I mean: Rob and I haven't let you down?

Mrs. Phelps. Not yet, Dave. But, you know the old saying?

David. What old saying?

Mrs. Phelps. That a boy's mother is his best friend.

David. Oh! Bet I do!

Mrs. Phelps. Do you think of *your* mother as *your* best friend?

David. None better, certainly.

Mrs. Phelps. None better! Hm! You can say, though, that you haven't entirely outgrown me?

David. Of course I haven't! Why, I'd hate to have you think that just because I'm a grown man, I . . .

Mrs. Phelps. No son is ever a grown man to his mother!

[*There is a knock at the door*]

Who can that be at this hour?

David. I hope it's Chris. [*He starts for the door*]

Mrs. Phelps [freezing suddenly as she rises]. Dave!

David [turning]. What?

Mrs. Phelps. Wait. . . . I mustn't intrude. . . . Good-night. . . .

David [calling out]. Just a minute! [*To*

his mother, politely] You wouldn't be intruding!

Mrs. Phelps. Not on you, I know. But . . .

David. Not on Chris either!

Mrs. Phelps. I know best. Kiss me good-night.

David. Good-night, Mother. [*He kisses her cheek*]

Mrs. Phelps [giving him a quick hug]. God bless my big boy!

[*She goes as she came. DAVID'S look, as he watches her door close behind her, is baffled. He goes quickly to the other door. ROBERT is standing outside*]

David. For Pete's sake, Rob! I thought it was Chris! . . . Why didn't you walk in?

Robert. I thought Mother was in here.

David. She was. She just went to bed.

Robert [entering]. She must have thought it was Chris, too!

David. How do you mean?

Robert. I shouldn't rush things if I were you.

David. Maybe you're right. Women are too deep for me.

Robert. I came in for a smoke. I had to talk to you. I've been sitting in my room wondering what you think of all this.

David [finding and lighting a cigarette]. I don't think much, and that's the truth!

Robert. Good God, Dave, can't you be a little easier on me? Didn't you ever feel any doubts when you were engaged? Were you always so sure of Christina that you . . .

David. The first time I asked Chris to marry me, she made it perfectly clear that, as far as she was concerned, I was to consider myself dripping wet. After that I was too damn scared I wouldn't get her to think whether she loved me or not.

Robert [darkly]. And I never had one comfortable moment from the time Hester accepted me.

David. Oh, being in love's like everything else. You've got to put some guts in it.

Robert [with bitter anger]. You think I haven't got any guts. You want to make me look like a callous cad! All right, I'll be a cad. I don't care what people think about me! But I'll tell you one thing! I'm damned if I'm going to let you turn Mother against me!

David. Dó what?

Robert. You heard me!

David. My God, haven't you outgrown that old stuff yet?

Robert. I know from experience what to expect when you and Mother get together. I used to listen at that door, night after night, night after night, while you and Mother sat in here and talked me over. Then I'd watch for the change in her next morning at breakfast when I hadn't slept a wink all night. The way you used to own the earth at those breakfasts! Well, if you try any of that old stuff to-night, I'll lose the only prop I've got left.

David. Isn't it about time you let go of Mother's apron-strings?

Robert. You would say that! You don't realize that I'm desperate.

David. Desperate, hell! You're crazy! Mother's gone to bed and . . .

[*The wee mouseie scratches at the door again!*]

What's that?

Mrs. Phelps [entering]. It's only Mother. Are you two beaux quarreling? Jealous, jealous Robin! What's the matter?

David. Nothing.

Mrs. Phelps. A fine man is a frank man, David! Do you think I didn't hear every word you said? Surely you must know that Hester wasn't worthy of your brother?

David. Wasn't she? Well, let's not talk any more about it.

Mrs. Phelps. Oh, but we must. For all our sakes, we must clear the air. I have always taken the stand that my boys could do absolutely no wrong, and that is the proper stand for a mother to take. Didn't I always side with you in your school scrapes? Even against the masters? Even when you were clearly in the wrong? Of course, I did! And I shall not permit one word of criticism against your brother now. Loyalty, Dave! Loyalty! Come, now! Tell Mother all about it!

David. But if you overheard every word we said . . . !

Mrs. Phelps. "Overheard," David? Am I given to eavesdropping?

David. I didn't say so.

Mrs. Phelps. I simply want to make sure I didn't miss anything while I was in my bath.

David. I don't misunderstand him. I'm sorry for Hester, that's all.

Robert. We're all sorry for Hester.

David. I don't think it's your place to be too sorry.

Robert. Let's drop it, Mother.

Mrs. Phelps. No. I've got to know what's on Dave's mind. My whole life may hang on it. What is it, Dave? [*Carefully sounding*] If Robin's not to blame, perhaps I am?

Robert [horried]. Mother!

David. What's the use of getting so worked up over nothing?

Mrs. Phelps. Nothing! Can you say "nothing" after what we were talking about a few minutes ago?

David [cornered]. I only think . . .

Mrs. Phelps. What?

David. Well, that you've both handed Hester a somewhat dirty deal. And Chris must think so, too!

Mrs. Phelps [wary]. Indeed! And how, please?

David. Well, it comes of what Chris calls "mythologizing."

Mrs. Phelps [frightened]. Does Christina discuss our family affairs already?

David. No. It's one of her old ideas about people in general. You mythologize Rob into a little tin god. Rob thinks he is a little tin god. Along comes Hester and falls in love with the real Rob. She never heard of your little tin god Rob. She doesn't deliver the incense and tom-toms. That makes you and Rob sore, and the whole works goes to hell. That's mythologizing. Believe me, it can make plenty of trouble.

Mrs. Phelps [relieved that the criticism is so general]. If that's all I'm to blame for, I don't know that I can object. Expecting the best of everyone is, at least, a worthy fault. Still, if I may venture an older woman's opinion on one of Christina's ideas?

David. I wish to God I hadn't started this.

Mrs. Phelps. So do I. But perhaps you'll tell me what Christina would say to the true reason for Robin's break with Hester?

David. What is the true reason?

Mrs. Phelps. Do you want to tell him, Robin?

Robert [inspired]. I broke with Hester because of an ideal, the ideal of woman-kind Mother gave us both by being the great woman that she is. I knew I couldn't be happy with any woman who fell short of her.

Mrs. Phelps. What becomes of your "dirty" deal now, David?

David. But I'm not going against that ideal, Mother. That's another thing.

Robert. You couldn't have troubled much about it when you married!

Mrs. Phelps. You shouldn't have said that, Robin. I haven't had Christina's advantages. I wasn't given a German education.

David. Now, don't take this out on Chris, Mother.

Mrs. Phelps. I think I know a little of a mother's duty toward her daughter-in-law. Good-night, Robin. I must talk with your brother alone, now. And before you quarrel again, stop to think that you are all I have, you two, and try to consider me. It isn't much to ask and it won't be for long. You both know what the doctors think about my heart! Dr. McClintock tells me I may go at any moment. [After a pause] Good-night, Robin.

Robert [frightened]. Good-night, Mother.

Mrs. Phelps. You may come into my room later, if you like. I may need you to comfort me after . . .

[She waves her hand. He leaves. She has never taken her eyes off DAVID.

When the door closes behind ROBERT, she speaks]

David, in this moment, when your brother and I most needed your loyalty, you have hurt me more than I have ever been hurt in my life before, even by your father.

David. I never meant to hurt you.

Mrs. Phelps [working it up]. You have been wicked, David! Wicked! Wicked!

David. How?

Mrs. Phelps. You have shown me too clearly that what I most dreaded has already come to pass!

David. What, Mother?

Mrs. Phelps. You have loosened the bond between us. You have discarded me.

David [horrified]. But I haven't done any such thing!

Mrs. Phelps. Don't say any more! Act upon your treachery, if you will, but don't, please, don't say another thing. Remember!

"The brave man does it with a sword,
The coward with a word!"

[And she sweeps out, slamming her door after her]

David [speaking through her door]. But I didn't mean anything. . . . Won't you let me explain? . . . I didn't know what I was talking about!

[There is no answer. He rattles the door. It is locked. He comes away, swearing softly under his breath. Then, manfully, he takes refuge in sulks. He kicks off his slippers and throws his dressing-gown aside. He lights a cigarette and flounces into bed, snatching up a book or magazine en route. Just as he is settled, his mother's door opens again very slowly. MRS. PHELPS presents a tear-stained face to view and comes in]

Mrs. Phelps. Smoking in bed, Dave boy?

David [starting up]. Eh?

Mrs. Phelps. It's only Mother. . . . No, don't get up. . . . Let me sit here as I used to in the old days.

David [sitting up]. Mother, I didn't mean . . .

Mrs. Phelps. Never mind. I was wrong to be hurt.

David. But you had me all wrong. I mean . . . You and I . . . We're just the same as we always were. . . . Believe me, we are. . . . Why, if anything came to spoil things between us . . .

Mrs. Phelps [having conquered the first objective]. That's what I wanted you to say! Now talk to me about Christina.

David [taken aback without knowing why]. Huh?

Mrs. Phelps. Give me your hand in mine and tell me all about her.

David [obeying rather reluctantly]. What is there to tell?

Mrs. Phelps. Well, for one thing, tell me you think she's going to like me!

David [warmly]. She does already!

Mrs. Phelps. Doesn't think I'm an old-fashioned frump?

David. I should say not! How could she?

Mrs. Phelps. She's such a modern young lady. So lovely, but so very up-to-date. You must tell me everything I can do to win her to me. And I'll do it. Though I'm afraid of her, Dave.

David [amused]. Afraid of Chris. Why?

Mrs. Phelps. She's so much cleverer than I am. She makes me realize that I'm just a timid old lady of the old school.

David [with nice indignation]. You old!

Mrs. Phelps [*archly so brave about it*]. Yes, I am!

David. Well, you and Chris are going to be the best friends ever.

Mrs. Phelps. You are happy, aren't you?

David. You bet I am!

Mrs. Phelps. Really happy?

David. Couldn't be happier!

Mrs. Phelps. I'm so glad! And I thank God that when your hour struck it didn't strike falsely as it did for Robin. Because any one can see the difference between Christina and Hester. Of course, that's a little the difference between you and Rob. You know what I've always said. You are *my* son. Robert takes after his father. But you mustn't be impatient with Christina if she seems, at first, a little slow, a little resentful of our family. We've always been so close, we three. She's bound to feel a little out of it, at first. A little jealous . . .

David. Not Chris!

Mrs. Phelps. Oh, come now, Dave! I'm sure she's perfect, but you mustn't try to tell me she isn't human. Young wives are sure to be a little bit possessive and exacting and . . . selfish at first.

David. We needn't worry about that.

Mrs. Phelps. No. . . . At first I thought Christina was going to be hard and cold. I didn't expect her to have our sense of humor, and I don't believe she has much of that. But we've more than we need already. If only she will learn to care for me as I care for her, we can be so happy, all four of us together, can't we?

David. You bet we can!

Mrs. Phelps [*dreamily*]. Building our houses in Phelps Manor. . . . Deciding to put an Italian Villa here and a little bungalow there. . . . [*As DAVID grows restive*] But the important thing for you, Dave boy, is a sense of proportion about your marriage. I'm going to lecture you, now, for your own good. If, at first, Christina does seem a little exacting or unreasonable, particularly about us, remember that she has to adjust herself to a whole new world here, a very different world from her friends in Omaha. And you must never be impatient with her. Because, if you are, I shall take her side against you.

David. You are a great woman, Mother!

Mrs. Phelps. You're the great one! How many boys of your age let their wives un-

dermine all their old associations and loosen all their old ties!

David. Chris wouldn't try that!

Mrs. Phelps. She might not *want* to. But jealous girls think things that aren't so and say things that aren't true. Morbid things.

David. Morbid things? Chris?

Mrs. Phelps. Only you won't pay too much attention or take her too seriously. I know that, because you would no more let anyone strike at me than I would let anyone strike at you.

David. But Chris wouldn't . . .

Mrs. Phelps. As I said to Christina this afternoon: "Christina," I said, "I cannot allow you to sacrifice David!"

David. Chris sacrifice me! How?

Mrs. Phelps. Why, by taking you away from your magnificent opportunity here.

David. Oh!

Mrs. Phelps. Be master in your own house. Meet her selfishness with firmness, her jealousy with fairness and her . . . her exaggerations with a grain of salt. . . .

David. What exaggerations?

Mrs. Phelps. Well, you know . . . a girl . . . a young wife, like Christina . . . *might* possibly make the mistake of . . . well, of taking sides . . . in what happened downstairs, for instance . . . and without fully understanding. . . . You can see how fatal that would be. . . . But, if you face the facts always, Dave, boy, and nothing *but* the facts, your marriage will be a happy one. And, when you want advice, come to your mother always.

David. Thanks.

Mrs. Phelps. Now, isn't your mother your best friend?

David. You bet you are, Mummy!

Mrs. Phelps. How long it is since you've called me that! Bless you, my dear, dear boy!

[*She leans over to seal her triumph with a kiss. CHRISTINA'S entrance follows so closely upon her knock that the picture is still undisturbed for her to see. She has changed her dress for a very simple negligée. Her mood is dangerous*]

Christina. Oh, I beg your pardon!

Mrs. Phelps [*so sweetly, after the very briefest pause*]. Come in, Christina. I was only saying good-night to Dave. Nothing private! You're one of the family now. You

must feel free to come and go as you like in the house.

Christina. Thank you.

Mrs. Phelps. We can accustom ourselves to it, can't we, Dave?

David. Yeah. . . .

Christina. Dave and I have got so used to sharing the same room, I came in here quite naturally, and . . .

Mrs. Phelps. Here's your dressing-gown, Dave boy. We won't look while you slip it on.

[Confusedly DAVE gets out of bed and robes himself. CHRISTINA'S eyes meet his mother's. CHRISTINA'S eyes have the least flash of scorn in them; MRS. PHELPS', the least quaver of fear. In that glance, the two women agree on undying enmity]

David. You can . . . you can look now.

Christina. Are you quite sure I may, Mrs. Phelps?

Mrs. Phelps. Whatever else you may have taken from me, Christina, you cannot take from me the joy of feeling my son here, once more, in his old room, beside me.

Christina *[marking up the first score]*. I haven't meant to take anything from you, Mrs. Phelps.

Mrs. Phelps *[so sweetly again]*. You know I was only joking. *[She is routed, though]* Good-night. *[The two women kiss]*

Don't keep Dave up too late. He's very tired. *[She pats DAVE, as she passes him on her way to the door]* You must be tired, too, Christina. How is Hester, now?

Christina. Quite all right, thank you.

Mrs. Phelps. Thank you!

[She blows a kiss to DAVID from the door and goes. CHRISTINA stands motionless. DAVID reaches for a cigarette]

David. You look pretty stern, Chris.

Christina. Do I?

David You've been a brick.

Christina. Thanks.

David. Hester is all right, isn't she?

Christina. Yes, poor youngster! I shouldn't be surprised if she were really in luck, Dave.

David. You may be right. But it isn't exactly up to me to say so, is it?

[He lights his cigarette. Her eyes burn him up]

Christina. Dave. . . .

David. Yes?

Christina. Whom do you love?

David. You. Why?

Christina. I wondered, that's all. I want to be kissed.

David. That's easy. *[He takes her in his arms]*

Christina. Such a tired girl, Dave. . . . I want to be held on to and made much of. . . . I want to feel all safe and warm. . . . I want you to tell me that you're in love with me and that you enjoy being in love with me. Because just loving isn't enough, and it's being in love that really matters. . . . Will you tell me all that, please, Dave?

David *[hugging her]*. Darling!

Christina. You haven't kissed me yet.

David *[complying, a trifle absent-mindedly]*. There!

Christina *[as she draws back from him]*. That isn't what I call making love in a big way.

David *[repeating the kiss with more energy]*. Is that better?

Christina. There's still something lacking. . . . What's the matter? There's nobody watching us.

David. That's a funny thing to say.

Christina. You take me right back to my first beau in Germany. He never got very far, either. All the English he knew was "water closet."

David. Chris! Shame on you!

Christina. Shame on you, making me take to low jokes to amuse you. . . . I love you.

David. Darling, darling, Chris!

Christina. I love you! I love you! *[For a moment she clings to him wildly]* I hate being so far from you to-night, Dave. 'Way off there at the other end of the hall!

David. I'm none too pleased myself. It's just one of Mother's fool ideas. *[He lowers his voice whenever he mentions his mother]*

Christina. She naturally wanted you near her!

David. That's it. *[His eyes fall beneath her steady gaze]* We mustn't talk so loud. We'll keep Mother awake. She can hear every sound we make.

Christina. Let her hear! It'll do her good!

David. That's no way to talk, Chris!

Christina. Excuse me. I didn't mean to snap. I've been fearfully shaken up to-night.

David. I know you have.

Christina. And I'm awfully tired.

David. Poor girl!

Christina. Poor Hester! . . . I don't feel like going to bed yet. I want to talk. Do you mind?

David. Go to it.

Christina. I've never come up against anything like this before, I've heard of it, but I've never met it. I don't know what to do about it. And it scares me.

David. What does?

Christina. I don't know how to tell you. [With sudden force] But I've got to tell you, Dave. I've got to tell you. There are no two ways about that.

David. What are you driving at?

Christina. Well . . . [But she changes her mind] May I ask you a question? Rather an intimate one?

David. If you must!

Christina. Being your wife, I thought I might.

David. Shoot!

Christina. Do you look on me as apart from all other women? I mean, do you think of all the women in the world and then think of me quite, quite differently? Do you, Dave?

David. I'll bite. Do I?

Christina. Please answer me. It's awfully important to me just now.

David. Of course I do. . . . Why is it so important just now?

Christina. Because that's how I feel about you and all the other men in the world. Because that's what being in love must mean and being properly and happily married. Two people, a man and a woman, together by themselves, miles and miles from everybody, from *everybody* else, glancing around, now and then, at all the rest of mankind, at *all* the rest, Dave, and saying: "Are you still there? And getting along all right? Sure there's nothing we can do to help?"

David. Only we do help, don't we?

Christina. Only really if we feel that way about one another. Only *by* feeling that way.

David. That's pretty deep! You do go off on the damndest tacks!

Christina. Don't you see how that feeling between a man and a woman is what keeps life going?

David. Is it?

Christina. What else could be strong enough?

David. Perhaps you're right. [Then, unaccountably, he shies] But what's the idea in getting so worked up about it?

Christina. Because it matters so much, Dave . . . just now . . . that you and I feel that way about each other and that we go on feeling that way and exclude everybody, *everybody* else. Tell me you think so, too?

David. Sure, I think so. . . . [Then, again, he shies from her inner meaning] You're getting the worst habit of working yourself up over nothing!

Christina. Do you realize, Dave, that the blackest sinner on earth is the man . . . or woman . . . who breaks in on that feeling? Or tampers with it in any way? Or perverts it?

David. If you say so, I'll say he is.

Christina. He!

David. Huh?

Christina. Never mind. . . . Your brother didn't feel that way about poor Hester, did he?

David. Rob always was a funny egg.

Christina. Your mother calls him Robin! "Tweet! Tweet! What does the Birdie say?"

David. From all I can gather, Hester didn't feel much of *any* way about him.

Christina. I know better than that. . . . I've had that child on my hands for the past hour. I've learned an awful lot, Dave. About her, and *from* her.

David. Look here, Chris. . . . Don't you get mixed up in this business, will you?

Christina. I wonder if I'm not mixed up in it already.

David. Well, don't "take sides."

Christina. I wonder if I can help taking sides.

David. It's none of our business.

Christina. I wish I were sure of that. [Baffled, she again shifts her approach] Poor little Hester goes tomorrow morning. How long are we staying?

David. Oh, I dunno.

Christina. A week?

David. We can't do less, can we?

Christina. Can't we?

David. Don't you want to?

[There is another pause before CHRISTINA shakes her head. DAVID frowns] You see what comes of taking things so

hard? I'm just as distressed over what's happened as you are. Maybe more. But I certainly don't want to run away. It wouldn't be right. Mother'd never understand. I'd feel like a bum going off and leaving her in the lurch after this. Think what Rob's put her through today and what she'll have to go through with Hester's family and all her friends and everybody else before she's done!

Christina. She seems to be bearing up.

David. You can't be sure with Mother.

Christina. Can't you?

David. She's so damned game.

Christina. Is she?

David. Can't you see that? And, anyway, I've got to look around.

Christina. What at? The houses in Phelps Manor?

David. I know how you feel, Chris, about Mother's helping hand. But I can't be throwing away opportunities, now, can I? With the baby coming?

Christina [gravely]. No, Dave. Of course, you can't. Neither can I.

David. How do you mean?

Christina. Forgotten all about *my* opportunities, haven't you?

David. What opportunities?

Christina. My appointment.

David. Didn't Mother say she could scare up something for you here?

Christina. She thought she might "scare up" a place where I could "putter around" and keep myself "happy and contented" when the "real doctors" weren't working.

David. She didn't mean anything unkind, Chris. Just give Mother a chance and . . . What are you crying for?

Christina [hotly untruthful]. I'm not crying.

David. You are!

Christina. I can't help it. . . .

David. But what's the matter?

Christina. It doesn't look as if I'm to have much of a show for my eight years of hard work, does it?

David. Mother and I'll dope out something. I couldn't leave her now. You know that. And anyway, I've got to stay till I get my shirts washed. I've only got two left.

Christina. Then we stay, of course.

David. And I must say, Chris, that I don't think you're quite playing ball to judge my home and my family entirely on

what you've seen tonight. Besides, the whole purpose of this visit was to bring you and Mother together and to show Mother that a lady scientist mayn't be as bad as she sounds. Because you and Mother have just got to hit it off, you know.

Christina. Have we?

David. You're apt to be impatient, Chris, and I'm afraid you're intolerant.

Christina. Those are bad faults in a scientist.

David. They're bad faults in anybody. . . . Now, you just give me time, and you'll see how things straighten out.

Christina. Aren't you satisfied with the way our meeting has come off?

David. There's no use pretending it was ideal. I believe in facing the facts always. But don't you worry. Mother gets on *my* nerves sometimes. You just have to remember what a hard life she's had.

Christina. How has it been hard?

David. Oh, lots of ways. My father wasn't much, you know.

Christina. I didn't know. You've never mentioned him.

David. He died when I was five.

Christina. What was the matter with him? Women or drink?

David. Nothing like that. He just didn't amount to much.

Christina. Made a lot of money, didn't he?

David. Lots.

Christina. And left your mother rich. What other troubles has she had?

David. Well, her health.

Christina. It doesn't seem so bad.

David. It is, though. Heart. And I wish I could tell you half of what she's gone through for Rob and me.

Christina. Go on and tell me. I'd like to hear.

David. I've heard her say she was born without a selfish hair in her head.

Christina. No!

David. And that's about true. Why, I've seen her nurse Rob through one thing after another when she'd admit to me that she was twice as sick as he was. I've seen her come in here from taking care of him and she'd be half fainting with her bad heart, but there'd be nothing doing when I'd beg her to get him a nurse. She said we were her job, and she just wouldn't give in. And the way she always took interest in every-

thing we did. Why, when she used to come up to school, all the boys went just crazy about her.

Christina. I'm sure they did. [*But she turns the inquiry into more significant channels*] How did your girl friends get on with her?

David. Oh, they loved her, too! Mother used to give us dances here.

Christina. Did she invite the girls you were in love with?

David. I never fell in love! Not really. Not till I met you.

Christina. Darling! [*She smiles rather absently*] What was the name of the one your mother thought could wear my dress?

David. Clara Judd?

Christina. Weren't you sweet on Clara?

David. I dunno. What made you ask that?

Christina. Just something in the way your mother spoke of her this evening. It came back to me. Weren't you?

David. Mother thought so.

Christina. Used to pester you about Clara, didn't she?

David. She was afraid I was going to marry Clara.

Christina. I see. Anything wrong with her?

David. With Clara? No. Damn nice girl. You'll meet her.

Christina. Then why didn't your mother want you to marry her?

David. Thought I was too young.

Christina. When was it?

David. Summer after the war.

Christina. You weren't so young, were you?

David. You know Mother.

Christina. How about your brother? Did he used to fall in love a great deal?

David. I don't know that I'd call it "in love."

Christina. Why not?

David. It's the family skeleton. She was a chorus girl, my dear. She cost Mother twelve thousand berries.

Christina. That must have been jolly! Was she the only one or were there others?

David. There were plenty of others. Only they didn't have lawyers.

Christina. And then Hester?

David. Right.

Christina. Well, that's all very interesting.

David. What are you trying to prove?

Christina. An idea this affair of Hester's put into my head. And I must say, it fits in rather extraordinarily.

David. What does?

Christina. You're being too young to marry after the war and Robert's taking to wild women. . . . And you had to be three thousand miles from home to fall in love with me! Never mind. . . . That's enough of that! Now let me tell you something. Only you must promise not to get mad.

David. I won't get mad.

Christina. Promise?

David. Promise.

Christina [*after a deep breath*]. Shirts or no shirts, we've got to get out of here tomorrow.

David [*as though she had stuck him with a pin*]. Now, Chris! Haven't we been over all that?

Christina. Yes. But not to the bottom of it.

David. What more is there to say?

Christina [*with sudden violence*]. That a defenseless, trusting, little girl has been cruelly treated! We've got to "take sides" with her, Dave!

David. What's the matter with Hester's own family? This is their business, not ours!

Christina. We owe it to ourselves to make it our business.

David. I don't see it.

Christina. Why don't you see it? What have you put over your eyes that keeps you from seeing it? Do you dare answer that?

David. Dare? What do you mean?

Christina. "Face the facts," Dave! "Face the facts!"

David. Rot! You're making a mountain out of a mole-hill!

Christina. Cruelty to children isn't a mole-hill!

David. You're exaggerating! Hester's engagement isn't the first that was ever broken.

Christina. Think how it was broken and by whom!

David. You just said she was in luck to be rid of Rob. I'll grant you that. I haven't any more use for Rob than you have.

Christina. Who stands behind Rob?

David. I don't know what you mean.

Christina. Don't you?

David. No.

Christina. All right, I'll tell you.

David [quickly]. You needn't. . . . Are you trying to pick a fight with me?

Christina. On the contrary. I'm asking you to stand by me. [Her eyes corner him]

David. I won't go away and leave Mother in the lurch.

Christina. You see? You do know what I mean!

David. I don't! I'm just telling you I won't let Mother down.

Christina. You'd rather stand by your mother than by the right, wouldn't you?

David. Oh, the right!

Christina. Isn't Hester the right?

David [cornered again]. I can't help it if she is. I won't let Mother down.

Christina. You'll let me down.

David. Oh, Chris! It's late. Come on. Let's turn in.

Christina. You'd rather stand by your mother than by me, wouldn't you?

David. No, I wouldn't. I tell you Hester's none of our business.

Christina. You'll admit *this* is?

David. What is?

Christina. This! . . . Who comes first with you? Your mother or me?

David. Now what's the good of putting things that way?

Christina. That's what things come to! If your mother and I ever quarreled about anything, if it ever came up to you to choose between sticking by me and sticking by her, which would you stick by?

David. I'd . . . I'd try to do the right thing. . . .

Christina. That isn't an answer. That's another evasion.

David. But why ask such a question?

Christina. Because I love you. Because I've got to find out if you love me. And I'm afraid . . . I'm afraid. . . .

David. Why?

Christina. Because you won't see the facts behind all this. I'm trying to tell you what they are, and you won't listen. You can't even hear me.

David. I can hear you. And a worse line of hooley I've never listened to in my life.

Christina [gravely, but with steadily increasing fervor]. Have you ever thought what it would be like to be trapped in a submarine in an accident? I've learned to-

night what that kind of panic would be like. I'm in that kind of a panic now, this minute. I've been through the most awful experience of my life tonight. And I've been through it alone. I'm still going through it alone. It's pretty awful to have to face such things alone. . . . No, don't interrupt me. I've got to get this off my chest. Ever since we've been married I've been coming across queer rifts in your feeling for me, like arid places in your heart. Such vast ones, too! I mean, you'll be my perfect lover one day, and the next, I'll find myself floundering in sand, and alone, and you nowhere to be seen. We've never been really married, Dave. Only now and then, for a little while at a time, between your retirements into your arid places. . . . I used to wonder what you did there. At first, I thought you did your work there. But you don't. Your work's in my part of your heart, what there is of my part. Then I decided the other was just No-Man's Land. And I thought: little by little, I'll encroach upon it and pour my love upon it, like water on the western desert, and make it flower here and bear fruit there. I thought: then he'll be all alive, all free and all himself; not partly dead and tied and blind; not partly some one else—or nothing. You see, our marriage and your architecture were suffering from the same thing. They only worked a little of the time. I meant them both to work all the time. I meant you to work all the time and to win your way, *all* your way, Dave, to complete manhood. And that's a good deal farther than you've got so far. . . . Then we came here, and this happened with Hester and your brother, and you just stepped aside and did nothing about it! You went to bed. You did worse than that. You retired into your private wastes and sat tight. . . . I've shown you what you should do, and you won't see it. I've called to you to come out to me, and you won't come. So now I've discovered what keeps you. Your mother keeps you. It isn't No-Man's Land at all. It's your mother's land. Arid, sterile, and your mother's! You won't let me get in there. Worse than that, you won't let life get in there! Or she won't! . . . That's what I'm afraid of, Dave: your mother's hold on you. And that's what's kept me from getting anywhere with you, all these months. I've seen what she can do with Robert. And

what she's done to Hester. I can't help wondering what she may not do with you and to me and to the baby. That's why I'm asking you to take a stand on this business of Hester's, Dave. You'll never find the right any clearer than it is here. It's a kind of test case for me. Don't you see? What you decide about this is what you may, eventually, be expected to decide about . . . about our marriage.

David [after a pause, with sullen violence]. No! I'm damned if I see!

Christina [breaking]. Then I can't hope for much, can I? . . . I feel awfully like a lost soul, right now. . . . Oh, my God, what am I going to do! What am I going to do!

David. I hope you're going to behave. You ought to be ashamed. Just as I was bringing Mother around to you and . . .

Christina [violently]. You'd better think a little about bringing me around to your mother!

David. Chris!

Christina. Why should your mother and I get on?

David. Because you should, that's why. Because she's an older woman and my mother. And you know, just as well as I do . . .

Christina. I know a great deal better than you that your mother dislikes me fully as much as I dislike her. You're wasting your time trying to bring your mother and me together, because we won't be brought. You say you believe in facing the facts. Well, let's see you face that one!

David. I've never heard anything so outrageous. When you know what Mother means to me and what . . .

Christina [desperately]. Your mother! Your mother! Always your mother! She's got you back! Dave, her big boy, who ran off and got married! She's got you back!

David. I won't stand for any more of this. A man's mother is his mother.

Christina [crescendo]. And what's his wife, may I ask? Or doesn't she count?

David. This is morbid rot! She warned me you'd be jealous of her!

Christina. Did she?

David. But I never expected anything like this!

Christina. What's going to become of me?

David. I won't stand for any more. . . .

Christina. Hester's escaped, but I'm

caught! I can't go back and be the old Christina again. She's done for. And Christina, your wife, doesn't even exist! That's the fact I've got to face! I'm going to have a baby by a man who belongs to another woman!

David. Damn it, Chris! Do you want Mother to hear you?

Christina. Do I not!

[*Mrs. Phelps* stands in her door, white, but steady]

David [turning, sees her]. Oh . . . You did hear!

Mrs. Phelps. How could I help hearing every word that Christina said?

David. Oh, this is awful!

Mrs. Phelps. We know, now, where we stand, all three of us.

David. Chris, can't you tell her you didn't mean it?

Mrs. Phelps [with heroic sarcasm]. Christina isn't one to say things she doesn't mean. And I have no intention of defending myself.

David. Mother, please! . . . Chris, you'd better beat it.

Mrs. Phelps. I ask her to stay. She has made me afraid ever to be alone with you again. She must have made you afraid to be alone with me.

David. Nonsense, Mother! She hasn't done anything of the sort. You'd better go, Chris. It's the least you can do after what you've said.

Christina. The very least. I belong with Hester now. [*She goes quickly*]

David [turning wildly to his mother]. I'll straighten everything out in the morning. I swear I will!

Mrs. Phelps [in a very different, very noble tone]. This is an old story, Dave boy, and I'm on Christina's side just as I said I should be.

David. I can't have you talking like that, Mother!

Mrs. Phelps. I accept my fate. You have your own life to live with the woman you have chosen. No boy could have given me back the love I gave you. Go to Christina! Make your life with her! No bond binds you to me any longer.

David. That isn't true!

Mrs. Phelps. I'm not complaining. I'm only sorry for one thing. I'm only sorry to see you throw away your chance here, your great chance!

David. But I haven't thrown it away. I'll stay here and work for you, if you want me to.

Mrs. Phelps. Christina won't let you. You know that!

David. She's my wife, isn't she?

Mrs. Phelps. Think what that means, Dave! Think what that means!

David. And you're my mother. I'm thinking what that means, too!

Mrs. Phelps. Then it *isn't* good-bye? Then I've still got my big boy, after all?

David. You bet you've got him!

Mrs. Phelps [in triumph]. Oh, Dave! Dave! Dave!

David. Now, Mummy!

[But a sound downstairs distracts him]
Hello! What's that?

[She listens, too]

Mrs. Phelps. Heavens, it isn't a fire, is it?

David. Wait . . . I'll see. . . . [He opens the door into the hall and stands listening]

Christina [below]. I went into her room, and she wasn't there, and then I looked for her and I found the dining-room window open.

Robert [below]. What do you think has happened?

Christina [below]. I don't like to imagine things, but . . .

Robert [below]. Hester, where are you?

Christina [below]. She's got away! I tell you, she's got away! I shouldn't have left her. . . .

David [speaking during the above]. What?

Mrs. Phelps. It's Christina and Robert.

David. Something's happened to Hester.

Mrs. Phelps. No!

David. Chris! What's going on?

Robert [below]. Hester! Where are you, Hester?

Christina [appearing in the hall]. Hester's got away, Dave. Out by the dining-room window. You'll have to get dressed and find her. She can't get to town tonight in this cold.

David. All right. We'll have a look.

Mrs. Phelps. The little fool! Let her go, Dave!

Christina. But, Mrs. Phelps, she isn't properly dressed. She didn't even take her coat. . . .

Robert [still calling below]. Hester!

Where are you, Hester? Hester! . . . Oh, my God!

[CHRISTINA has walked to the window to look out. She utters an inarticulate scream]

David. What is it, Chris?

Mrs. Phelps. Good heavens!

Christina [strangled with horror]. It's the pond! The holes in the pond! Quick, Dave, for heaven's sake!

David. What? . . . Oh! . . . [He runs out as CHRISTINA opens the window]

Mrs. Phelps. Dave! . . . [To CHRISTINA] What is it you say?

Robert [below]. Dave! For God's sake! Hold on, Hester! Don't struggle!

[DAVID's shouts join his]

Christina [as she collapses on the bed]. The pond! . . . I can't look. . . .

Mrs. Phelps. Oh, I've no patience with people who have hysterics!

Christina. Mrs. Phelps, the girl's drowning!

Mrs. Phelps. Oh, no! . . . Not that! [She, too, goes to the window, but recoils in horror from what she sees] They'll save her, won't they? They must . . . they must save her. . . . If only . . . [Then a new fear overwhelms her] If only those two boys don't catch pneumonia! [And she leaps to the window to call after her sons as they race, shouting, across the snow] Robin, you're not dressed! Dave, get your coat! Are you crazy? Do you want to catch pneumonia?

ACT THREE

The living-room again, and the next morning. MRS. PHELPS is wearing a simple house dress and is busily fixing a great many flowers which she takes from boxes strewn about the stage. After she has been so occupied for a few seconds, ROBERT enters.

Robert. The doctor's gone.

Mrs. Phelps [surprised]. Without seeing me?

Robert. It seems so.

Mrs. Phelps. Doesn't that seem very strange to you, Robin? Of course, I thought it best not to go up to Hester's room with him. In view of the perfectly unreasonable attitude she's taken toward me. But I should

have supposed, naturally, that he'd have made his report to me.

Robert. He says she may as well go today. He says traveling won't be as bad for her as staying here.

Mrs. Phelps. Did he say that to you?

Robert. I couldn't face him. *They* told him the whole story.

Mrs. Phelps. Christina and Hester?

[ROBERT nods]

I might have known they would. . . . And he listened to them and never so much as asked for me?

Robert. What of it!

Mrs. Phelps. He'll never enter this house again!

Robert. So he said! He also said there's nothing the matter with your heart and never has been anything the matter with it. He said it would take a stick of dynamite to kill you.

Mrs. Phelps. Damned homeopath!

Robert. And that isn't the worst.

Mrs. Phelps. What more?

Robert. He said that I'd always been a rotter.

Mrs. Phelps. Oh?

Robert. And that I couldn't have been anything else—with such a mother.

[*There is venom in this last. Mrs.*

PHELPS'S lips stiffen under it!]

Mrs. Phelps. I think you might have spared me that, Robin.

Robert. I didn't mean to be nasty.

Mrs. Phelps. No. Still, there are things one doesn't repeat to sensitive people. [*But a dark foreboding will not be downed!* Somehow, though, I can't help feeling that . . . [*She does not say what she sees in the future!*]

Robert. Neither can I.

[*She looks at him in quick fear. Then she returns to her flowers with a shrug!*]

Mrs. Phelps. Oh, well! There can't have been much wrong with the girl if she's able to go this morning.

Robert. Thank God for that. [*Then with level-eyed cruelty!*] It might have been serious, though, after what you did to the telephone. Because we couldn't have reached a soul, you know. And without Christina in the house . . .

Mrs. Phelps. How was I to know the little fool wanted to drown herself?

Robert [*shuddering*]. For heaven's sake, don't put it that way!

Mrs. Phelps. How do you put it?

Robert. She tried to get away, that's all. And she got lost in the dark and . . .

Mrs. Phelps. I tell you, she tried to kill herself. I've always suspected there was insanity in her family. She had a brother who was an aviator in the war. Everybody knows that aviators are lunatics. Her own conduct has never been what I should call normal. Everything points to insanity. That's another reason why you shouldn't have married her. Because we've never had any of that in our family. Except your father's Bright's Disease. I shall certainly tell everyone that Hester is insane.

Robert. Perhaps that *will* make things simpler.

Mrs. Phelps. As to the telephone, it's the only thing I've ever done to be ashamed of, and I said as much when I did it. She made me angry with her wanton attacks on you.

Robert. I didn't hear any wanton attacks.

Mrs. Phelps. Where were you?

Robert. Out there in the hall.

Mrs. Phelps. You couldn't have heard the things she muttered under her breath.

Robert [*with an incredulous sneer*]. No!

[*There is a pause, sullen on his part, troubled on hers!*]

We're just like Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, aren't we?

Mrs. Phelps. For heaven's sakes, how?

Robert. We've got into a mess we can't ever get out of. We'll have to get in deeper and deeper until we go mad and . . .

Mrs. Phelps. Don't be ridiculous.

Robert. I'm sorry, Mother, but I can't help regretting.

Mrs. Phelps. Regretting what?

Robert [*in a low tone*]. Hester.

Mrs. Phelps. Nonsense, Robin! I tell you . . .

Robert. What do you know about it? Do you understand me any better than Hester did?

Mrs. Phelps. How can you, Robin? I not understand you? Haven't I always told you that however David may take after his father, you are *my* son?

Robert. What's that got to do with it?

Mrs. Phelps. Robin!

Robert. If I wasn't sure that I *loved* Hester, how on earth can I be sure that I

didn't love her? I don't know this minute whether I loved her or not. I only know that I'll regret losing her all my life long. [A movement of exasperation from his mother stops him. Then he concludes] Maybe Dave's right about me. Maybe I am too weak to love any one.

Mrs. Phelps [frightened—to herself]. Dave didn't say that!

Robert. He said I hadn't any guts.

Mrs. Phelps. Ugh! That horrible word! No, Robin. You must put all such thoughts aside.

Robert. I suppose I'll have to take your word for it [Then with sudden, cold fury] But I won't next time!

Mrs. Phelps. Robin! You're not holding me responsible?

Robert. Who put the idea in my head? Who persuaded me? Who made me promise?

Mrs. Phelps. Are you implying that I came between you?

Robert. Well, if you didn't, who did?

Mrs. Phelps. Robin! You ought to be ashamed!

Robert. Think so?

Mrs. Phelps. That you should turn on me! Some day you'll regret this. It won't be Hester, but *this* that you'll regret. . . . When it's too late. [And from force of habit her hand steals to her heart]

Robert. I daresay I've got a life full of regrets ahead of me. [He walks sullenly to the window]

Mrs. Phelps. You frighten me, Robin! I don't know you like this.

Robert. Don't you?

[There is a pause. MRS. PHELPS stares at him in growing horror. He looks out of the window]

Mrs. Phelps. No.

Robert [looking out, his back to her] That's too bad. . . . There's Dave putting up danger signs all around the pond! Isn't that like him! After it's too late.

[She turns away from him and dully goes on with her flowers, carrying a bowl of them over to the piano. ROBERT watches her coldly. Then a sudden frown contracts his brow, and he moves toward her]

Mother!

Mrs. Phelps. What?

Robert. Don't put those flowers there! They're too low!

Mrs. Phelps. Fix them yourself.

Robert [changing them with a jar of something else] Isn't that better?

Mrs. Phelps. Much. What an eye you have!

Robert. Perhaps I'll develop it some day.

Mrs. Phelps. Would you like to?

Robert. I've got to do something.

Mrs. Phelps [darkly]. I quite agree. Every young man should have some profession.

[Then, suddenly and involuntarily, the boy reverts and is a child again]

Robert. What are we going to do, Mother?

Mrs. Phelps [in a low tone]. Do?

Robert. What are we going to do, you and I? We're in the same boat, you know.

Mrs. Phelps [in a lower tone]. I don't know what you mean.

Robert. Well, what am I going to do, then? I can't stay here and face people after this!

Mrs. Phelps. What will there be to face?

Robert [crescendo]. You know as well as I do. This story'll be all over this damn town. And Hester's people aren't going to keep quiet in New York. Her brothers go everywhere I go. My friends will begin cutting me in the street.

Mrs. Phelps. If we say she's insane?

Robert. What difference will that make?

Mrs. Phelps. The Paris sails on Saturday.

Robert [after a pause, tremulously]. What of it?

Mrs. Phelps. We might go to Washington to hurry our passports.

Robert. Could we get passage, though?

Mrs. Phelps [slowly]. I've already wired for it. This morning.

Robert. I see. . . . Then we're to sneak away like two guilty fugitives!

Mrs. Phelps [avoiding his eye]. Sh! Don't say such things!

[DAVID enters, his cheeks stung crimson by the cold]

David. Phew, it's cold. The pond'll be frozen again by tomorrow if this keeps up. What's the doc say about Hester?

Robert. She's leaving us today.

David. I'm glad she's well enough.

Mrs. Phelps. There never was anything the matter with her.

David. It's easy to see, Mother that you

don't often bathe in that pond in zero weather.

Mrs. Phelps. I hope I have more self-control. Robin, will you see, please, that the car is ready for Hester?

Robert. Yes. [*He goes*]

David. Anybody seen Chris?

Mrs. Phelps. Not I.

David. No. I suppose not. . . . What's the idea in the floral display?

Mrs. Phelps. I felt I had to have flowers about me.

David. That sounds pretty Green Hat-tish. . . . It has a festive look, too. I don't see what there is to celebrate.

Mrs. Phelps [*noble tragedienne that she is*]. Last night, at a single blow, beauty was stricken out of my life. I can't live without beauty, Dave. You must know that. So I went to the florist this morning and bought these. They comfort me . . . a little.

David [*with that worried look again*]. I've been thinking, Mother, that maybe, all things considered, after last night, it will be as well for me to take Chris away on Wednesday, say.

Mrs. Phelps. If you like.

David. We can come back later. After things have cooled down.

Mrs. Phelps. Later, I hope, and often.

David. Time does make things easier, doesn't it?

Mrs. Phelps. They say so.

David. When scientists get these wild ideas and fly off the handle, they're just as embarrassed afterwards as any one else would be.

Mrs. Phelps. Naturally.

David. And then Hester's running away and the telephone being busted and all. . . .

Mrs. Phelps. I quite understand.

David. I knew you would.

Mrs. Phelps [*the boxes and papers all stowed away, she sits down to business*]. What I'm wondering now, though, is what I'm to do with Robin? And I'm afraid you've got to help me with him.

David. I'll do anything I can.

Mrs. Phelps. If I were well and able to stand the things I used to stand before my heart went back on me—because it has gone back on me—and before my blood pressure got so high . . . I shouldn't trouble you.

But as I am, and with Robin on the verge of a complete breakdown . . .

David. But Rob isn't . . .

Mrs. Phelps. Oh, yes, he is, Dave! He said things to me before you came in that no son of mine would dream of saying unless he had something the matter with him. I've got to get him away.

David. Send him abroad.

Mrs. Phelps. I don't think he ought to go alone. He can't face things alone. He's like his father, in that. You're my son, you know. That's why I always turn to you.

David. Why not go with him?

Mrs. Phelps. Because I'm really not well enough in case anything should happen. . . . And I don't know what to do. Oh, Dave, boy, do you think . . .

David. What?

Mrs. Phelps. That Christina could spare you for a little? Just a few weeks? Just long enough to get Rob and me settled in some restful place? Do you think she would?

David. There's no need of that!

Mrs. Phelps. Of course, I'd love to have Christina, too. Only I'm afraid that *would* be asking too much. I mean, making her put off her work when she's so set on it.

David. But Rob isn't going to give you any trouble.

Mrs. Phelps. Do you think I'd ask such a sacrifice of you . . . and Christina, if I weren't sure that it's absolutely necessary? Oh, I'm not thinking of myself. I no longer matter. Except that I shouldn't want to die abroad with only Robin there, in his present condition.

David. Don't talk that way, Mother!

Mrs. Phelps. Why not? I'm not asking you to be sorry for me. It's Robin I'm thinking of. Because we haven't done all that we should for Robin. And now that I'm old . . . and sick . . . dying . . . [*She breaks down*]

David. You're not, Mother!

Mrs. Phelps [*weeping hysterically*]. I can't cope with him. He'll slip back again to drinking and fast women . . .

David. Get hold of yourself, Mother!

Mrs. Phelps [*more hysterical*]. And when I think of what I might have done for him and realize that it's too late, that I haven't any more time . . . only a few

months . . . or weeks . . . I don't know . . . I . . . [She really becomes quite faint]

David [snatching her hand in terror]. Mother, what's the matter? Are you ill?

Mrs. Phelps [recovering by inches, as she gasps for breath]. No! It's nothing . . . I . . . Just give me a minute . . . Don't call any one . . . I'll be all right. . . . There! . . . That's better!

David. You scared me to death.

Mrs. Phelps. I scare myself sometimes. You see I do need *somebody's* help.

David. Yes, I see you do.

Mrs. Phelps. And so I thought: well, since Dave is going to build my houses in Phelps Manor. . . . You're not going to disappoint me there, I hope?

David. Oh, no!

Mrs. Phelps. Well, then you won't want to start in that New York office.

David. Why not?

Mrs. Phelps. When you'll be leaving so soon to begin here? They wouldn't want you.

David. I hadn't thought of that.

Mrs. Phelps. And so I thought: Well, he can't begin here until April anyway, and that leaves him with two idle months on his hands when he might be drawing plans and getting ideas abroad. Think it over, Dave, boy.

David. You certainly are a great planner, Mother.

Mrs. Phelps. I make such good plans!

David. When would you be sailing?

Mrs. Phelps. Well, I . . . I had thought . . . vaguely . . . of sailing on the *Paris* . . . Saturday . . .

David. Good Lord! Give a man time to think! I want to do the right thing, but I couldn't leave Chris . . . Not with the baby coming, you know.

Mrs. Phelps. But you'll be home in plenty of time for that.

David. That may all be, but, just the same, I wouldn't feel right to leave her.

[ROBERT returns]

Mrs. Phelps. I've just been telling Dave about our wonderful plans, Robin, and he's so enthusiastic! I shouldn't wonder if he came along with us. [A sign to DAVID to play up]

Robert. What are the plans?

Mrs. Phelps. Why, your going abroad to study interior decorating, of course.

[ROBERT looks surprised]

David. Oh, is Rob going to do that?

Robert. Any objections?

David. I think it's just the job for you. Planting rosebuds on bath tubs.

Robert. I can make your houses look like something after you've finished with them.

Mrs. Phelps [ecstatically]. My two boys in partnership! Oh, that's always been my dream! Oh, how simply things come straight when people are willing to co-operate and make little sacrifices! If there's one thing I pride myself on, it's my willingness to make little sacrifices. Here we are, we three, a moment ago all at odds with life and with each other; now united and of a single mind . . .

David. This is all very fine. But don't you forget that I've got to talk to Christina . . .

[But CHRISTINA has opened the door upon his very words. She is dressed as she was when she first came to the house. She wears her hat and her fur coat and carries her bag in her hand]

Christina [speaking as she enters]. Well, now's your chance, Dave. What have you got to talk to me about?

David [staring at her]. What's the idea, Chris?

Christina [setting the bag down by the door]. I'm going away with Hester. Are you coming, too?

David [staggered]. Now?

Christina. In a few minutes. I came down ahead. No, don't go, Mrs. Phelps. And won't you stay, too, Robert? I think it's best that we should thrash this question out together, here and now, for good and all.

Mrs. Phelps. What question, Christina?

Christina. The David question, Mrs. Phelps. Whether David is going on from this point as your son or as my husband.

Robert. What?

Christina. Isn't that the issue?

[She asks the question less of DAVID than of MRS. PHELPS, who turns to her sons in terror]

Mrs. Phelps. I can't go through this a second time!

David [quieting her with a gesture]. No one expects you to. . . . [To CHRISTINA, pleading almost pathetically] You're not going to begin all that again, Chris?

Christina. I'm afraid I am.

David. But, just as I was getting everything all straightened out . . .

Christina. Were you doing that?

David. If only you'll leave things be, they'll be all right. You may believe it or not . . .

Christina. I can't believe it, and I can't leave things be. Oh, I'd walk out without a word, even loving you as I do, if I thought this state of affairs made any one of you happy.

Robert. What state of affairs?

Christina. The state of affairs you've all been living in and suffering from, for so long.

Mrs. Phelps. You might let us judge our own happiness.

Christina. I might, if you had any. But you haven't.

Robert. You're quite sure of that?

Christina. Quite, Robert. You're all of you perfectly miserable! Am I wrong?

Mrs. Phelps. Christina! Please!

Robert. Thank you for being sorry for us!

Christina. You give me such good reason, Robert. Such awfully good reason! Because you're not really bad people, you know. You're just wrong, all wrong, terribly, pitifully, all of you, and you're trapped . . .

Mrs. Phelps. What we say in anger, we sometimes regret, Christina. . . .

Christina. Oh, I'm not angry. I was, but I've got over it. I rather fancy myself, now, as a sort of scientific Nemesis. I mean to strip this house and to show it up for what it really is. I mean to show you up, Mrs. Phelps. Then Dave can use his own judgment.

Mrs. Phelps [in blank terror at this attack]. Oh! Dave, I. . . .

David. Now, Mother! Chris! Haven't you any consideration for our feelings? Are they nothing to you?

Christina. I'm trying to save my love, my home, my husband, and my baby's father. Are they nothing to you?

David. But surely I can be both a good son and a good husband!

Christina. Not if your mother knows it, you can't!

Mrs. Phelps [with a last desperate snatch at dignity]. If you'll excuse me, I'd rather not stay to be insulted again. [She is going]

Christina. You'll probably lose him if you don't stay, Mrs. Phelps!

[MRS. PHELPS stays. CHRISTINA turns to DAVID]

No, Dave, There's no good in any more pretending. Your mother won't allow you to divide your affections, and I refuse to go on living with you on any basis she will allow.

Mrs. Phelps. I cannot see that this is necessary.

Christina. It's a question a great many young wives leave unsettled, Mrs. Phelps. I'm not going to make that mistake. [Back to DAVE again] You see, Dave, I'm not beating about the bush. I'm not persuading you or wasting any time on tact. Do you want your chance or don't you? Because, if you don't, I'll have to get over being in love with you as best I can and . . .

David. I wish you wouldn't talk this way, Chris!

Christina. Are you coming with me? On the understanding that, for the present, until your affections are definitely settled on your wife and child, you avoid your mother's society entirely. Well? What do you say?

David. I don't know what to say.

Christina. You never do, Dave darling.

David. I'm too shocked. I've never been so shocked in my life.

Christina [with a glance at her wrist watch]. Just take your time, and think before you speak.

David. I don't mean that I don't know what to say about taking my chance, as you call it. I can answer that by reminding you of your duty to me. I can answer that by calling all this what I called it last night: morbid rot! But I am shocked at your talking this way about my mother and to her face, too!

Christina. Is that your answer?

David. No, it isn't! But a man's mother is his mother.

Christina. So you said last night. I'm not impressed. An embryological accident

is no grounds for honor. Neither is a painful confinement, for I understand, Mrs. Phelps, that you're very proud of the way you bore your children. I know all about the legend of yourself as a great woman that you've built up these thirty years for your sons to worship. It hasn't taken me long to see that you're not fit to be any one's mother.

David. Chris!

Robert [*speaking at the same time*]. See here, now!

Mrs. Phelps. Let her go on! Let her go on! She will explain that or retract it!

Christina. I'm only too glad to explain. It's just what I've been leading up to. And I'll begin by saying that if my baby ever feels about me as your sons feel about you, I hope that somebody will take a little enameled pistol and shoot me, because I'll deserve it.

Mrs. Phelps [*going again*]. I've been insulted once too often.

Christina. I don't mean to insult you. I'm being as scientific and impersonal as possible.

Robert. Good God!

Christina [*regardless*]. Speaking of insults, though, what explanation can you offer me for your rudeness to me as a guest in your house?

Mrs. Phelps. I have not been rude to you.

Christina. You have been appallingly rude. Second question: Why do you resent the fact that I am going to have a baby?

Mrs. Phelps. I don't resent it.

Christina. Then why are you so churlish about it?

Mrs. Phelps. Your indelicacy about it would have . . .

Christina. That's another evasion. You're afraid that baby will give me another and stronger hold on David, and you mean to separate David and me if it's humanly possible.

Mrs. Phelps. I do not! I do not!

Christina. Did you or did you not bend every effort to separate Hester and Robert?

Mrs. Phelps. I most certainly did not!

Christina. Then how do you account for the deliberate and brutal lies you told Hester about Robert? Because she did lie to Hester about you, Robert. She told

Hester that you never wanted to marry her.

Robert [*aghast*]. Mother, you didn't!

Mrs. Phelps. Of course, I didn't.

Christina [*Joan of Arc raising the siege of Orleans*]. I heard her. And I heard her call both of you back, last night, when you ran out to save Hester from drowning. I heard her call you back from saving a drowning girl for fear of your catching cold. I heard her. I heard her.

David [*shaken*]. You shouldn't have called us, Mother!

Christina. Can she deny that her one idea is to keep her sons dependent on her? Can she deny that she opposes any move that either one of you makes toward independence? Can she deny that she is outraged by your natural impulses toward other women?

Mrs. Phelps [*furious*]. I deny all of it!

Christina. You may deny it until you're black in the face; every accusation I make is true! You belong to a type that's very common in this country, Mrs. Phelps—a type of self-centered, self-pitying, son-devouring tigress, with unmentionable proclivities suppressed on the side.

David. Chris!

Christina. I'm not at all sure it wouldn't be a good idea, just as an example to the rest of the tribe, to hang one of your kind every now and then!

Robert. Really!

Christina. Oh, there are normal mothers around; mothers who *want* their children to be men and women and take care of themselves; mothers who are people, too, and don't have to be afraid of loneliness after they've outlived their motherhood; mothers who can look on their children as people and enjoy them as people and not be forever holding on to them and pawing them and fussing about their health and singing them lullabies and tucking them up as though they were everlasting babies. But you're not *one* of the normal ones, Mrs. Phelps! Look at your sons, if you don't believe me. You've destroyed Robert. You've swallowed him up until there's nothing left of him but an effete make-believe. Now he's gone melancholy mad and disgraced himself. And Dave! Poor Dave! The best he can do is dodge the more desperate kinds of unhappiness by

pretending! How he survived at all is beyond me. If you're choking a bit on David, now, that's my fault because you'd have swallowed him up, too, if I hadn't come along to save him! Talk about cannibals! You and your kind beat any cannibals I've ever heard of! And what makes you doubly deadly and dangerous is that people admire you and your kind. They actually admire you! You professional mothers! . . . You see, I'm taking this differently from that poor child upstairs. She's luckier than I am, too. She isn't married to one of your sons. Do you remember what she said about children yesterday? "Have 'em. Love 'em. And leave 'em be."

Mrs. Phelps. You are entitled to your opinions, Christina, just as I am to mine and David is to his. I only hope that he sees the kind of woman he's married. I hope he sees the sordidness, the hardness, the nastiness she offers him for his life.

Christina [*with an involuntary cry of pain*]. I'm not nasty! I'm not!

Mrs. Phelps. What have you to offer David?

Christina. A hard time. A chance to work on his own. A chance to *be* on his own. Very little money on which to share with me the burden of raising his child. The pleasure of my society. The solace of my love. The enjoyment of my body. To which I have reason to believe he is not indifferent.

Mrs. Phelps [*revolted*]. Ugh!

Christina. Can you offer so much?

Mrs. Phelps. I offer a mother's love. Or perhaps you scoff at that?

Christina. Not if it's kept within bounds. I hope my baby loves me. I'm practically certain I'm going to love my baby. But within bounds.

Mrs. Phelps. And what do you mean by within bounds?

Christina. To love my baby with as much and as deep respect as I hope my baby will feel for me if I deserve its respect. To love my baby unpossessively; above all, unromantically.

Mrs. Phelps. I suppose that's biology! You don't know the difference between good and evil!

Christina. As a biologist, though, I do know the difference between life and death. And I know sterility when I see it. I doubt if evil is any more than a fancy name for

sterility. And sterility, of course, is what you offer Dave. Sterility for his mind as well as for his body. That's your professional mother's stock in trade. Only we've been over that, haven't we? Well, Dave! How about it?

Robert. I think this has gone far enough!

Mrs. Phelps. No! This woman has got to answer me one question.

Christina. Willingly. What is it?

Mrs. Phelps. How old were you when you married?

Christina. The same age I am now. Twenty-nine.

Mrs. Phelps. I was twenty.

Christina. Just Hester's age.

Mrs. Phelps [*riding over her*]. I was twenty, and my husband was fifteen years older than I. Oh, thirty-five isn't old, but he was a widower, too, and an invalid. Everyone told me I'd made a great match. And I thought I had. But before we'd been married a week, I saw my illusions shattered. I knew at the end of a week how miserable and empty my marriage was. He was good to me. He made very few demands on me. But he never dreamed of bringing the least atom of happiness into my life. Or of romance. . . . Only a woman who has lived without romance knows how to value it. . . . That isn't true of my life, either. I didn't live without romance. I found it . . . and I'm proud to have found it where you say it doesn't belong . . . in motherhood. I found it in my two babies. In Dave first and in Robin four years later. I found it in doing for them myself all those things which, nowadays, nurses and governesses are hired to do. To spare mothers! I never asked to be spared. . . . Their father died. The night he died, Robin had croup, and I had to make the final choice between my duties. I stayed with Robin. You, with your modern ideas and your science, Christina, would you have chosen differently? I knew the difference between life and death that night. And I've known it for every step of the way I battled for Robin's health, every step as I taught Dave his gentleness and his generosity. . . . If I made my mistakes, and I'm only human . . . I'm sorry for them. But I can point to my two sons and say that my mistakes could not have been serious ones . . . Think! I was a widow. rich and very

pretty, at twenty-five. Think what that means! But I had found my duty and I never swerved from it. . . . There was one man in particular. A fine man. But I resisted. I knew that second marriage was not for me. Not when I had my sons. I put them first, always. . . . I shall not stoop to answer any of the foulnesses you have charged me with. They are beneath my dignity as a woman and contempt as a mother. No, there is one I cannot leave unanswered. That word "sterility." Sterility is what I offer David, you say. I wonder, is sterility David's word for all he has had of me these thirty years? Let him answer that for himself. All my life I have saved to launch my two boys on their careers, saved in vision as well as in money. I don't offer my sons a love half dedicated to selfish, personal ambition. I don't offer them careers limited by the demands of other careers. I offer David a clear field ahead and a complete love to sustain him, a mother's love, until a real marriage, a suitable marriage may be possible for him. And I do not deny that I would cut off my right hand and burn the sight out of my eyes to rid my son of you! . . . That is how I answer your impersonal science, Christina.

Christina [before either of the boys can speak]. I see! . . . Well. . . . It's a very plausible and effective answer. And I'm sure you mean it, and I believe it's sincere. But it is the answer of a woman whose husband let her down pretty hard and who turned for satisfaction to her sons. . . . I'm almost sorry I can't say more for it, but I can't. . . . [She turns from MRS. PHELPS to the two sons] It's a pity she didn't marry again. Things would have been so much better for both of you if she had. [With increasing force, to DAVID] But the fact remains, Dave, that she did separate you and me last night and that she separated us because she couldn't bear the thought of our sleeping together.

[They flinch at this, but she downs them]

And she couldn't bear that because she refuses to believe that you're a grown man and capable of desiring a woman. And that's because, grown man that you are, down, down in the depths of her, she still wants to suckle you at her breast!

David [in a cry of horror]. Chris!

Robert [at the same time]. Good God!!

Mrs. Phelps [at the same time]. No!

Christina. You find that picture revolting, do you? Well, so it is. . . . I can't wait any longer for your answer, Dave.

David. I don't think you've any sense of decency left in you. Of all the filthy, vile . . .

Christina. I'm sorry you feel that way.

David. How else can I feel?

Christina. Is that your answer?

David. I want to do the right thing, but . . .

Christina. Remember me, won't you, on Mother's Day! [She calls out] Are you ready, Hester?

David. You make things mighty hard Chris, for a man who knows what fair play is and gratitude and all those other things I naturally feel for my mother.

Christina. Do I?

David. What do you expect me to say?

Christina. I don't know. I've never known. That's been the thrill of it.

[HESTER, dressed for her journey, appears in the door and stands beside

CHRISTINA. CHRISTINA'S arm encircles the younger girl's shoulders]

It's time, Hester.

Hester. Isn't David coming with us?

Christina. I'm afraid not.

Hester. Oh, Christina!

Christina. Sssh! Never mind. It can't be helped.

Robert [breaking out]. Hester! Hester! Couldn't we try again? Couldn't you . . .

Hester. What?

Robert. I mean . . . what are you going to do . . . now?

Hester. I don't know. [Then a smile comes through] Yes, I do, too, know. I'm going to marry an orphan.

Christina [with a long look at DAVID]. Good-bye, Dave.

David [desperately pleading]. Chris, you can't! It isn't fair to me!

Christina [still looking at him]. I'm sorry it's come to this. . . . It might easily have been so . . .

[Her voice chokes with crying. She picks up her bag where she put it down beside the door and goes quickly out. HESTER, with a reproachful glance at DAVID, follows her. DAVID stands

rigid. MRS. PHELPS watches him.
ROBERT covers his face with his hands.
Then the front door slams, and
DAVID comes suddenly to life]

David [with a frantic cry]. Chris! [He turns excitedly to his mother] I'm sorry, Mother, but I guess I'll have to go.

Mrs. Phelps [reeling]. No, Dave! No! No!

David. I guess she's right.

Mrs. Phelps. Oh, no!! You mustn't say that! You mustn't say that!

David [holding her off from him]. I can't help it. She said we were trapped. We are trapped. I'm trapped.

Mrs. Phelps [absolutely beyond herself]. No! No! She isn't right! She can't be right! I won't believe it!

David [breaking loose from her]. I can't help that!

Mrs. Phelps [speaking at the same time]. For God's sake, Dave, don't go with her! Not with that awful woman, Dave! That wicked woman! For God's sake, don't leave me for her, Dave! [She turns wildly to ROBERT] You know it isn't true, Robin! You know it was vile, what she said! Tell him! Tell him! [But DAVID is gone] Dave! My boy! My boy! My boy! Oh, my God! Dave! She isn't right! She isn't, Dave! Dave! Dave!

[The front door slams a second time.

There is an awful pause]

He's gone.

Robert [uncovering his face]. Who? Dave?

Mrs. Phelps. Can you see them from the window?

Robert [looking out]. Yes. . . . They're talking. . . . Now he's kissed her and taken the suitcase. . . . Now he's helping Hester . . . Hester . . . into the car. . . . Now he's getting in. . . . Now they're starting.

Mrs. Phelps. I loved him too much. I've been too happy. Troubles had to come. I must be brave. I must bear my troubles bravely.

Robert [turning to her]. Poor Mother!

Mrs. Phelps. I must remember that I still have one of my great sons. I must keep my mind on that.

Robert [with a step or two toward her]. That's right, Mother.

Mrs. Phelps. And we'll go abroad, my great Robin and I, and stay as long as ever we please.

Robert [as he kneels beside her]. Yes, Mother.

Mrs. Phelps [her voice growing stronger as that deeply religious point of view of hers comes to her rescue]. And you must remember what David, in his blindness, has forgotten: that mother love suffereth long and is kind; envieth not, is not puffed up, is not easily provoked; beareth all things; believeth all things; hopeth all things; endureth all things. . . . At least, I think my love does?

Robert [engulfed forever]. Yes, Mother.

THE END

THE PLOUGH AND THE STARS

A TRAGEDY IN FOUR ACTS

By SEAN O'CASEY

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SEAN O'CASEY AND HIS PLAYS

SEAN O'CASEY (Shaun O'Cathasaigh) was born in Dublin in 1884 and spent most of his early life struggling against poverty and disease in the slums. Ill health, poor eyesight, and the necessity of earning a living at the earliest possible moment prevented him from obtaining a formal education. As a boy, O'Casey was sent off to push carts, dig ditches, wrap parcels, deliver papers; later he became a laborer on railroads and construction projects. He early interested himself in the workers' movement, and in the Gaelic League, and took part in the Easter Rebellion of 1916 which forms the setting of *The Plough and the Stars*.

Out of this background, and a love of Shakespeare and the theatre gratified only by a few hard bought visits to the Abbey, O'Casey became the leading playwright of post-war Ireland. His first produced play, *The Shadow of a Gunman* (1922), written, not surprisingly, out of his own experiences, deals with the Fenian troubles with England in 1921. It is a somewhat ramshackle composition with nonetheless the close observation and engaging characters which are his chief stock in trade. He followed this with two trivial farces, little more than exercises in construction. His great talents were fully realized in *Juno and the Paycock* (1925), a tragicomedy which has become a classic of the modern theatre. He recalls the Easter Rebellion in which he had participated, and the play is his observation (without auctorial comment) of the effect of the sacrifices of himself and of those others who thought "no man can do enough for Ireland." It is bitter and disillusioned and at the same time affectionate and understanding. The play is constructed almost in the manner of Tchekhov, with sudden juxtapositions of comedy and pathos, and audiences are often uncertain whether to laugh or to cry. This characteristic structure is what lends O'Casey's works their sense of being a picture of life, of reality.

In *The Plough and the Stars*, O'Casey paints on a larger canvas. He seems here to have recaptured the whole existence of the urban Irish working classes, as Synge had the peasants. The play throbs with life, with humor and tragedy, sympathy and hatred. The genius for comic portraiture which created Captain Boyle in *Juno* produces in this play Fluther Good, the carpenter, Peter Flynn, and the Young Covey. The pathetic and human Juno here becomes Nora and Bessie Burgess. Comic or tragic, these characters are not types but complex human beings.

The play was received by yet another in the long series of riots which have accompanied opening nights at the Abbey Theatre. The audience resented the pessimistic attitude taken about the Revolutionaries, and the degraded picture of city life. At one point during the performance, a dozen women climbed out of the pit and onto the stage to debate the importance of "morality, patriotism, and the virtues of home life" with the actors; and at the end of the play, W. B. Yeats came forward and announced to the howling audience, "You have disgraced yourselves again. Is this to be the ever-recurring celebration of the arrival of Irish genius?"

Yeats, although opposed to the realistic drama as a whole, was a staunch advocate of O'Casey, comparing him at one time with Swift. But after *The Plough* riots, the playwright left Ireland and settled in England where, removed from his immediate inspiration, he began experimenting with form and trying his hand at expressionism. *The Silver Tassie*, his first play in the new genre, was rejected by Yeats with the explanation, "Your great power of the past has been the creation of some unique character who dominated all about him and was himself a main impulse in some action that filled the play from beginning to end." This, coupled with the Tchekhovian structure (although he had seen only a one-act play by the great Russian), is the secret of O'Casey's success and the basis of his technique.

He has continued to write in England semi-expressionist plays and volumes of autobiography. Several of the plays have been produced with some success, most notably *Within the Gates* (1933), but they are largely without life except when a realistically observed or comically conceived Irishman is on the scene, and some of the latest have been marred as drama by a tendency to lecture the audience on communist doctrine. But his

tragedy, *The Plough and the Stars*, and the tragicomic *Juno and the Paycock*, are contributions of lasting value to the contemporary drama, and their great central figures incarnate in the inimitable performances of Barry Fitzgerald are among the most memorable of the post-war theatre.

The Plough and the Stars was first produced at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, in 1926, with F. J. McCormick as Clitheroe, Barry Fitzgerald as Fluther, and Maureen Delaney as Bessie Burgess. In the same year it was presented in London with Arthur Sinclair as Fluther and Sara Allgood as Bessie.

CHARACTERS

JACK CLITHEROE, a bricklayer-commandant in the <i>Irish Citizen Army</i>	}	<i>Residents in the tenement</i>
NORA CLITHEROE, his wife		
PETER FLYNN, a labourer—Nora's uncle		
THE YOUNG COVEY, a fitter—Clitheroe's cousin		
BESSIE BURGESS, a street fruit-vendor		
MRS. GOGAN, a charwoman		
MOLLSER, her consumptive child		
FLUTHER GOOD, a carpenter		
LIEUT. LANGON, a civil servant—of the <i>Irish Volunteers</i>		
CAPT. BRENNAN, a chicken butcher—of the <i>Irish Citizen Army</i>		
CORPORAL STODDART, of the <i>Wiltshires</i>		
SERGEANT TINLEY, of the <i>Wiltshires</i>		
ROSIE REDMOND, a daughter of "the Digs"		
A BAR-TENDER		
A WOMAN		
THE FIGURE IN THE WINDOW		

ACT I—*The living-room of the Clitheroe flat in a Dublin tenement*

ACT II—*A public-house, outside of which a meeting is being held*

ACT III—*The street outside the Clitheroe tenement*

ACT IV—*The room of Bessie Burgess*

TIME—*Acts I and II, November 1915; Acts III and IV, Easter Week, 1916.*

A few days elapse between Acts III and IV

THE PLOUGH AND THE STARS

ACT ONE

SCENE—The home of the CLITHEROES. It consists of the front and back drawing-rooms in a fine old Georgian house, struggling for its life against the assaults of time, and the more savage assaults of the tenants. The room shown is the back drawing-room, wide, spacious and lofty. At back is the entrance to the front drawing-room. The space, originally occupied by folding doors, is now draped with casement cloth of a dark purple, decorated with a design in reddish-purple. One of the curtains is pulled aside, giving a glimpse of the front drawing-room, at the end of which can be seen the wide, lofty windows looking out into the street. The room directly in front of the audience is furnished in a way that suggests an attempt towards a finer expression of domestic life. The large fireplace on L. is of wood, painted to look like marble (the original has been taken away by the landlord). Below the fireplace, on the wall, is a small mirror. On the mantelshelf are two candlesticks of dark carved wood. Between them is a small clock. Over the clock, on wall, is a picture of "The Sleeping Venus." On the right of the entrance to the front drawing-room is a copy of "The Gleaners," on the opposite side a copy of "The Angelus." Underneath "The Gleaners" is a chest of drawers on which stands a green bowl filled with scarlet dahlias and white chrysanthemums. Near to the fireplace is a couch which at night forms a double bed for CLITHEROE and NORA. Near the end of the room opposite to the fireplace is a gate-legged table, covered with a cloth. On top of the table a huge cavalry sword is lying. To the L. above fireplace is a door which leads to a lobby from which the staircase leads to the hall. The floor is covered with a dark green linoleum. The room is dim except where it is illuminated from the glow of the fire.

FLUTHER GOOD is repairing the lock of door, L. A claw hammer is on a chair beside him, and he has a screwdriver in his hand. He is a man of 40 years of age, rarely surrendering to thoughts of anxiety, fond of his

"oil" but determined to conquer the habit before he dies. He is square-jawed and harshly featured; under the left eye is a scar, and his nose is bent from a smashing blow received in a fistic battle long ago. He is bald, save for a few peeping tufts of reddish hair around his ears; and his upper lip is hidden by a scrubby red moustache, embroidered here and there with a grey hair. He is dressed in a seedy black suit, cotton shirt with a soft collar, and wears a very respectable little black bow. On his head is a faded jerry hat, which, when he is excited, he has a habit of knocking farther back on his head, in a series of taps. In an argument he usually fills with sound and fury, generally signifying a row. He is in his shirt sleeves at present, and wears a soiled white apron, from a pocket in which sticks a carpenter's two-foot rule. He has just finished the job of putting on a new lock, and, filled with satisfaction, he is opening and shutting the door, enjoying the completion of a work well done. Sitting at the fire, airing a white shirt, is PETER FLYNN. He is a little, thin bit of a man, with a face shaped like a lozenge; on his cheeks and under his chin is a straggling wiry beard of a dirty-white and lemon hue. His face invariably wears a look of animated anguish, mixed with irritated defiance, as if everybody was at war with him, and he at war with everybody. He is cocking his head in such a way that suggests resentment at the presence of FLUTHER, who pays no attention to him, apparently, but is really furtively watching him. PETER is clad in a singlet, white whipcord knee-breeches, and is in his stockinged feet.

A voice is heard speaking outside of door L. (it is that of MRS. GOGAN talking to someone).

Mrs. Gogan [outside door L.]. Who are you lookin' for, sir? Who? Mrs. Clitheroe? . . . Oh, excuse me. Oh ay, up this way. She's out, I think: I seen her goin'. Oh, you've somethin' for her. Oh, excuse me. You're from Arnott's. . . . I see. . . . You've a parcel for her. . . . Righto. . . . I'll take it. . . . I'll give it to her the min-

ute she comes in. . . . It'll be quite safe. . . . Oh, sign that. . . . Excuse me. . . . Where? . . . Here? . . . No, there; righto. Am I to put Maggie or Mrs.? What is it? You dunno? Oh, excuse me.

[MRS. GOGAN opens the door and comes in. She is a doleful-looking little woman of 40, insinuating manner and sallow complexion. She is fidgety and nervous, terribly talkative, has a habit of taking up things that may be near her and fiddling with them while she is speaking. Her heart is aflame with curiosity, and a fly could not come into nor go out of the house without her knowing. She has a draper's parcel in her hand, the knot of the twine tying it is untied]

[MRS. GOGAN crosses in front of FLUTHER, behind the couch, to the table R., where she puts the parcel, fingering it till she has the paper off, showing a cardboard box. PETER, more resentful of this intrusion than of FLUTHER's presence, gets up from the chair, and without looking around, his head carried at an angry cock, marches into the room at back. He leaves the shirt on the back of the chair]

[Removing the paper and opening the cardboard box it contains] I wondher what's this now? A hat! [She takes out a hat, black, with decorations in red and gold] God, she's goin' to th' devil lately for style! That hat, now, cost more than a penny. Such notions of upperosity she's getting. [Putting the hat on her head] Swank! [Turning to FLUTHER] Eh, Fluther, swank, what!

[FLUTHER looks over at her, then goes on opening and shutting the door]

Fluther. She's a pretty little Judy, all the same.

Mrs. Gogan. Ah, she is, an' she isn't. There's prettiness an' prettiness in it. I'm always sayin' that her skirts are a little too short for a married woman. An' to see her, sometimes of an evenin', in her glad-neck gown would make a body's blood run cold. I do be ashamed of me life before her husband. An' th' way she thries to be polite, with her "Good mornin', Mrs. Gogan," when she's goin' down, an' her "Good evenin', Mrs. Gogan," when she's comin' up. But there's politeness an' politeness in it.

Fluther. They seem to get on well together all th' same.

Mrs. Gogan. Ah, they do, an' they don't. The pair o' them used to be like two turtle doves always billin' an' cooin'. You couldn't come into th' room but you'd feel, instinctive like, that they'd just been afther kissin' an' cuddlin' each other. . . . It often made me shiver, for, afther all, there's kissin' an' cuddlin' in it. But I'm thinkin' he's beginnin' to take things more quietly; the mystery of havin' a woman's a mystery no longer. . . . She dhresses herself to keep him with her, but it's no use—afther a month or two, th' wondher of a woman wears off.

[MRS. GOGAN takes off the hat, and puts it back in the box; going on to rearrange paper round box, and tie it up again]

Fluther. I dunno, I dunno. Not wishin' to say anything derogatory, I think it's all a question of location: when a man finds th' wondher of one woman beginnin' to die, it's usually beginnin' to live in another.

Mrs. Gogan. She's always grumblin' about havin' to live in a tenement house. "I wouldn't like to spend me last hour in one, let alone live me life in a tenement," says she. "Vaults," says she, "that are hidin' th' dead, instead of homes that are shelterin' th' livin'." "Many a good one," says I, "was reared in a tenement house." Oh, you know, she's a well-up little lassie, too; able to make a shillin' go where another would have to spend a pound. She's wipin' th' eyes of th' Covey an' poor oul' Pether—everybody knows that—screwin' every penny she can out o' them, in order to turn th' place into a babby-house. An' she has th' life frightened out o' them; washin' their face, combin' their hair, wipin' their feet, brushin' their clothes, thrimmin' their nails, cleanin' their teeth—God Almighty, you'd think th' poor men were undhergoin' penal servitude.

Fluther [with an exclamation of disgust]. A-a-ah, that's goin' beyond th' beyonds in a tenement house. That's a little bit too derogatory.

[PETER enters from room, back, head elevated and resentful fire in his eyes; he is still in his singlet and trousers, but is now wearing a pair of unlaced boots—possibly to be decent in the presence of MRS. GOGAN]

[PETER comes down c. and crosses, front of settee, to chair in front of fire; he

turns the shirt which he has left to air on the back of the chair, then goes, front of couch, to the chest of drawers, back L., opens drawer after drawer, looking for something; as he fails to find it, he closes each drawer with a snap. He jerks out things neatly folded, and shoves them back into the drawers any way]

Peter [*in anguish, snapping a drawer shut*]. Well, God Almighty, give me patience.

[*PETER returns, front of couch, to the fireplace, gives the shirt a vicious turn on the back of the chair, and goes back, front of couch, to room, back, FLUTHER and MRS. GOGAN watching him furtively all the time*]

Mrs. Gogan [*curiously*]. I wondher what is he foostherin' for now?

Fluther [*coming c.*]. He's adornin' himself for the meeting to-night. [*He pulls a handbill from one of his pockets, and reads*] "Great Demonstration an' Torchlight Procession around places in the City sacred to th' memory of Irish Pathriots to be concluded be a meetin', at which will be taken an oath of fealty to th' Irish Republic. Formation in Parnell Square at eight o'clock." Well, they can hold it for Fluther. I'm up th' pole; no more dhrink for Fluther. It's three days now since I touched a dhrop, an' I feel a new man already.

[*He goes back to door L.*]

Mrs. Gogan. Isn't oul' Peter a funny-lookin' little man? . . . Like somethin' you'd pick off a Christmas Tree. . . . When he's dhressed up in his canonicals, you'd wondher where he'd been got. God forgive me, when I see him in them, I always think he must ha' had a Mormon for a father! He an' th' Covey can't abide each other; th' pair o' them is always at it, thryin' to best each other. There'll be blood dhrawn one o' these days.

Fluther. How is it that Clitheroe himself, now, doesn't have anythin' to do with th' Citizen Army? A couple o' months ago, an' you'd hardly ever see him without his gun, an' th' Red Hand o' Liberty Hall in his hat.

Mrs. Gogan. Just because he wasn't made a Captain of. He wasn't goin' to be in anything where he couldn't be conspishuous. He was so cocksure o' being made one that he bought a Sam Browne belt, an' was always puttin' it on an' standin' at th' door

showing it off, till th' man came an' put out th' street lamps on him. God, I think he used to bring it to bed with him! But I'm tellin' you herself was delighted that that cock didn't crow, for she's like a clockin' hen if he leaves her sight for a minute.

[*While she is talking she takes up a book from the table, looks into it in a near-sighted way, and then leaves it back. She now lifts up the sword, and proceeds to examine it*]

Be th' look of it, this must ha' been a general's sword. . . . All th' gold lace an' th' fine figaries on it. . . . Sure it's twiced too big for him.

[*FLUTHER crosses from door L. behind couch, back of table, where MRS. GOGAN is examining the sword, and looks at it, standing to L. of MRS. GOGAN*]

Fluther [*contemptuously*]. Ah, it's a baby's rattle he ought to have, an' he as he is, with thoughts tossin' in his head of what may happen to him on th' Day of Judgment.

[*PETER appears at the curtained door, back, sees MRS. GOGAN with the sword, and a look of vexation comes on to his face. He comes down c. to the table, snatches the sword out of MRS. GOGAN's hands, and bangs it back on the table. He then returns into room, back, without speaking*]

Mrs. Gogan [*to PETER, as he snatches the sword*]. Oh, excuse me. [*To FLUTHER*] Isn't he the surly oul' rascal; Fluther?

[*She wanders from the table, back of the couch, to the chest of drawers, where she stops for a few moments, pulling out drawers and pushing them in again*]

Fluther [*leaning against left side of the table*]. Take no notice of him. . . . You'd think he was dumb, but when you get his goat, or he has a few jars up, he's vice versa.

[*FLUTHER coughs. MRS. GOGAN, who has wandered from the chest of drawers, down L., to the fireplace, where she is fingering PETER's shirt, turns to look at FLUTHER, as soon as she hears the cough*]

Mrs. Gogan [*with an ominous note in her voice*]. Oh, you've got a cold on you, Fluther.

Fluther [*carelessly*]. Ah, it's only a little one.

Mrs. Gogan. You'd want to be careful, all th' same. I knew a woman, a big lump of a woman, red-faced an' round-bodied, a little awkward on her feet; you'd think, to look at her, she could put out her two arms an' lift a two-storied house on th' top of her head; got a ticklin' in her throat, an' a little cough, an' th' next mornin' she had a little catchin' in her chest, an' they had just time to wet her lips with a little rum, an' off she went. [She begins to look at and handle the shirt]

Fluther [a little nervously]. It's only a little cold I have; there's nothing derogatory wrong with me.

Mrs. Gogan [warningly]. I dunno; there's many a man this minute lowerin' a pint, thinkin' of a woman, or pickin' out a winner, or doin' work as you're doin', while th' hearse dhrawn be th' horses with the black plumes is dhrivin' up to his own hall door, an' a voice that he doesn't hear is muttherin' in his ear, "Earth to earth, an' ashes t' ashes, an' dust to dust."

Fluther [faintly, affected by her talk]. A man in th' pink o' health should have a holy horror of allowin' thoughts o' death to be festherin' in his mind, for [with a frightened cough] be God, I think I'm atther gettin' a little catch in me chest that time—it's a creepy thing to be thinkin' about.

[FLUTHER sits weakly in chair L. of table]

Mrs. Gogan. It is, an' it isn't; it's both bad an' good. . . . It always gives meself a kind o' thresspassin' joy to feel meself movin' along in a mournin' coach, an' me thinkin' that, maybe, th' next funeral'll be me own, an' glad, in a quiet way, that this is somebody else's.

Fluther [very frightened]. An' a curious kind of a gaspin' for breath—I hope there's nothin' derogatory wrong with me.

Mrs. Gogan [examining the shirt]. Frills on it, like a woman's petticoat.

Fluther [panic-stricken]. Suddenly gettin' hot, an' then, just as suddenly, gettin' cold.

Mrs. Gogan [holding out the shirt towards FLUTHER]. How would you like to be wearin' this Lord Mayor's nightdress, Fluther?

Fluther [vehemently]. Blast you an' your nightshirt! Is a man fermentin' with fear to stick th' showin' off to him of a thing that looks like a shinin' shroud?

Mrs. Gogan [startled at FLUTHER's vehemence]. Oh, excuse me.

[PETER appears at curtained door, back. Sees his shirt in MRS. GOGAN's hand, comes rapidly down c., goes front of couch to MRS. GOGAN, snatches shirt from her, and replaces it on the back of the chair; he returns the same way to room, back]

Peter [loudly, as he goes to room, back]. Well, God Almighty give me patience!

Mrs. Gogan [to PETER]. Oh, excuse me.

[There is heard a cheer from the men working outside on the street, followed by the clang of tools being thrown down, then silence]

[Running into the back room to look out of the window] What's the men repairin' th' streets cheerin' for?

Fluther [sitting down weakly on a chair]. You can't sneeze but that oul' one wants to know th' why an' th' wherefore. . . . I feel as dizzy as bedammed! I hope I didn't give up th' beer too suddenly.

[The COVEY comes in by door L. He is about 25, tall, thin, with lines on his face that form a perpetual protest against life as he conceives it to be. Heavy seams fall from each side of nose, down around his lips, as if they were suspenders keeping his mouth from falling. He speaks in a slow, wailing drawl; more rapidly when he is excited. He is dressed in dungarees, and is wearing a vividly red tie. He comes down c. and flings his cap with a gesture of disgust on the table, and begins to take off his overalls]

Mrs. Gogan [to the COVEY, as she runs back into the room]. What's after happenin', Covey?

The Covey [with contempt]. Th' job's stopped. They've been mobilized to march in th' demonstration to-night undher th' Plough an' th' Stars. Didn't you hear them cheerin', th' mugs. They have to renew their political baptismal vows to be faithful in *seculo seculorum*.

Fluther [sitting on the chair L. of table, forgetting his fear in his indignation]. There's no reason to bring religion into it. I think we ought to have as great a regard for religion as we can, so as to keep it out of as many things as possible.

The Covey [pausing in the taking off of his dungarees]. Oh, you're one o' the boys

that climb into religion as high as a short Mass on Sunday mornin's? I suppose you'll be singin' songs o' Sion an' songs o' Tara at th' meetin', too.

Fluther. We're all Irishmen, anyhow; aren't we?

The Covey [with hand outstretched, and in a professional tone]. Look here, comrade, there's no such thing as an Irishman, or an Englishman, or a German or a Turk; we're all only human bein's. Scientifically speakin', it's all a question of the accidental gatherin' together of mollycewels an' atoms.

[*PETER comes in from room, back, with a stiff collar in his hand, comes down c., crosses, in front of couch, to the mirror on the wall L., below the fireplace. He stands before the mirror and tries to put on his collar. FLUTHER gets up from the chair, goes c. and stands to R. of the COVEY*]

Fluther. Mollycewels an' atoms! D'ye think I'm goin' to listen to you thyrin' to juggle Fluther's mind with complicated cunundrums of mollycewels an' atoms?

The Covey [rather loudly]. There's nothin' complicated in it. There's no fear o' th' Church tellin' you that mollycewels is a stickin' together of millions of atoms o' sodium, carbon, potassium o' iodide, etcetera, that, accordin' to th' way they're mixed, make a flower, a fish, a star that you see shinin' in th' sky, or a man with a big brain like me, or a man with a little brain like you!

Fluther [more loudly still]. There's no necessity to be raisin' your voice; shoutin's no manifestin' forth of a growin' mind.

[*FLUTHER and the COVEY turn to look at PETER*]

Peter [struggling with his collar]. God give me patience with this thing. . . . She makes these collars as stiff with starch as a shinin' band of solid steel! She does it purposely to thry an' thwart me. If I can't get it on to the singlet, how in the name of God am I goin' to get it on the shirt!

[*FLUTHER and the COVEY face each other again*]

The Covey [loudly]. There's no use o' arguin' with you; it's education you want, comrade.

Fluther [sarcastically]. The Covey an' God made th' world I suppose, wha'?

The Covey [jeering]. When I hear some men talkin' I'm inclined to disbelieve that

th' world's eight-hundhred million years old, for it's not long since th' fathers o' some o' them crawled out o' th' sheltherin' slime o' the sea.

Mrs. Gogan [from room at back]. There, they're afther formin' fours, an' now they're goin' to march away.

Fluther [scornfully taking no notice of MRS. GOGAN]. Mollycewels! [*He begins to untie his apron*] What about Adam an' Eve?

The Covey. Well, what about them?

Fluther [fiercely]. What about them, you?

The Covey. Adam an' Eve! Is that as far as you've got? Are you still thinkin' there was nobody in th' world before Adam an' Eve? [*Loudly*] Did you ever hear, man, of th' skeleton of th' man o' Java?

Peter [casting the collar from him]. Blast it, blast it, blast it!

[*PETER angrily picks up the collar he has thrown on the floor, goes up c., right of couch, to the chest of drawers, and begins to hunt again in the drawers*]

Fluther [to the COVEY, as he viciously folds apron]. Ah, you're not goin' to be let tap your rubbidge o' thoughts into th' mind o' Fluther.

The Covey. You're afraid to listen to th' thruth!

Fluther [pugnaciously]. Who's afraid?

The Covey. You are!

Fluther [with great contempt]. G'way, you wurum!

The Covey. Who's a worum?

Fluther. You are, or you wouldn't talk th' way you're talkin'.

[*MRS. GOGAN wanders in from room, back, turns L., sees PETER at the chest of drawers, turns back, comes down c., goes, front of couch, to the fireplace*]

The Covey. Th' oul', ignorant savage leppin' up in you, when science shows you that th' head of your god is an empty one. Well, I hope you're enjoyin' th' blessin' o' havin' to live be th' sweat of your brow.

Fluther. You'll be kickin' an' yellin' for th' priest yet, me boyo. I'm not goin' to stand silent an' simple listenin' to a thick like you makin' a maddenin' mockery o' God Almighty. It 'ud be a nice derogatory thing on me conscience, an' me dyin', to look back in rememberin' shame of talkin'

to a word-weavin' little ignorant yahoo of a red flag Socialist!

Mrs. Gogan [at the fireplace, turning to look at the disputants]. For God's sake, Fluther, dhrop it; there's always th' makin's of a row in the mention of religion.

[She turns her head, and looks at the picture of "The Sleeping Venus," hanging over the mantelpiece. She looks at it intently and a look of astonishment comes on her face]

God bless us, it's the picture of a naked woman. [With a titter] Look, Fluther.

[FLUTHER looks over at the fireplace; comes slowly to the fireplace; looks steadily at the picture. PETER, hearing what was said, leaves the chest of drawers, and comes down, standing a little behind FLUTHER and MRS. GOGAN, and looks at the picture. The COVEY looks on from c.]

Fluther. What's undher it? [Reading slowly] "Georgina: The Sleeping Vennis." Oh, that's a terrible picture. . . . Oh, that's a shockin' picture! [Peering into it with evident pleasure] Oh, the one that got that taken, she must ha' been a prime lassie!

Peter [laughing in a silly way, with head tilted back]. Hee, hee, hee, hee, hee!

Fluther [indignantly, to PETER]. What are you hee, hee-in' for? [Pointing to the picture] That's a nice thing to be hee, hee-in' at. Where's your morality, man?

Mrs. Gogan [looking intently at it]. God forgive us, it's not right to be lookin' at it.

Fluther. It's nearly a derogatory thing to be in th' room where it is.

Mrs. Gogan [giggling hysterically]. I couldn't stop any longer in th' same room with three men, afther lookin' at it!

[MRS. GOGAN goes upstage L., and out by door L. The COVEY, who has taken off his dungarees, seeing PETER's shirt on the chair, throws dungarees over it with a contemptuous movement]

Peter [roused by the COVEY's action]. Where are you throwin' your dungarees? Are you thryin' to thwart an' torment me again?

The Covey. Who's thryin' to thwart you?

[PETER takes the dungarees from the back of the chair and flings them violently on floor]

Peter. You're not goin' to make me lose me temper, me young covey!

[The COVEY, in retaliation, takes PETER's white shirt from the back of the chair, and flings it violently on the floor]

The Covey. If you're Nora's pet aself, you're not goin' to get your own way in everything.

[The COVEY moves to the back end of the table, enjoying PETER's anger]

Peter [plaintively, with his eyes looking up at the ceiling]. I'll say nothin'. . . . I'll leave you to th' day when th' all-pitiful, all-merciful, all-lovin' God'll be handin' you to th' angels to be riev'in' an' roastin' you, tearin' an' tormentin' you, burnin' an' blastin' you!

The Covey. Aren't you th' little malignant oul' bastard, you lemon-whiskered oul' swine!

[PETER rushes to the table, takes up the sword, draws it from its scabbard, and makes for the COVEY, who runs round the table R., followed by PETER]

The Covey [dodging round the table—to FLUTHER]. Fluther, hold him, there. It's a nice thing to have a lunatic, like this, lashing round with a lethal weapon!

[The COVEY, after running round the table, rushes up c., and runs back of couch, out of door L., which he bangs to behind him in the face of PETER. FLUTHER remains near the fireplace, looking on]

Peter [hammering at the door—to the COVEY, outside]. Lemme out, lemme out. Isn't it a poor thing for a man who wouldn't say a word against his greatest enemy to have to listen to that Covey's twartin' animosities, shovin' poor, patient people into a lashin' out of curses that darken his soul with th' shadow of th' wrath of th' last day!

Fluther. Why d'ye take notice of him? If he seen you didn't, he'd say nothin' derogatory.

Peter. I'll make him stop his laughin' an' leerin', jibin' an' jeerin' an' scarifyin' people with his corner-boy insinuations! . . . He's always thryin' to rouse me: if it's not a song, it's a whistle; if it isn't a whistle, it's a cough. But you can taunt an' taunt—I'm laughin' at you; he, hee, hee, hee, hee!

The Covey [jeering loudly through the keyhole]. Dear harp o' me counthry, in darkness I found thee,

The dark chain of silence had hung o'er thee long—

Peter [frantically to FLUTHER]. Jasus, d'ye hear that? D'ye hear him soundin' forth his devil-souled song o' provocation? [Battering at door L.] When I get out I'll do for you, I'll do for you, I'll do for you! *The Covey* [through the keyhole]. Cuckoo-oo!

[NORA enters by door L. *She is a young woman of 23, alert, swift, full of nervous energy, and a little anxious to get on in the world. The firm lines of her face are considerably opposed by a soft, amorous mouth, and gentle eyes. When her firmness fails her, she persuades with her feminine charm. She is dressed in a tailor-made costume, and wears around her neck a silver fox fur*]

Nora [running in and pushing PETER away from the door]. Oh, can I not turn me back but th' two o' yours are at it like a pair o' fightin'-cocks! Uncle Peter . . . Uncle Peter . . . UNCLE PETER!

Peter [vociferously]. Oh, Uncle Peter, Uncle Peter be damned! D'ye think I'm goin' to give a free pass to th' young Covey to turn me whole life into a Holy Manual o' penances an' martyrdoms?

The Covey [angrily rushing into the room]. If you won't exercise some sort o' controul over that Uncle Peter o' yours, there'll be a funeral, an' it won't be me that'll be in th' hearse!

Nora [c. back, between PETER and the COVEY, to the COVEY]. Are yous always goin' to be tearin' down th' little bit of respectability that a body's thryin' to build up? Am I always goin' to be havin' to nurse yous into th' habit o' thryin' to keep up a little bit of appearance?

The Covey. Why weren't you here to see th' way he run at me with th' sword?

Peter. What did you call me a lemon-whiskered oul' swine for?

Nora. If th' two o' yours don't thry to make a generous altheration in your goin's on, an' keep on thryin' t' inaugurate th' customs o' th' rest o' th' house into this place, yous can flit into other lodgin's where your bowsey battlin' 'ill meet, maybe, with an encore.

[*The COVEY comes down, back of couch to the fire, and sits down in the chair where PETER's shirt had hung; he takes a book from a pocket and begins to read*]

Peter [to NORA]. Would you like to be called a lemon-whiskered oul' swine?

[NORA takes the sword from PETER, goes to the table, puts it back in the scabbard, goes to the chest of drawers, back L., and leaves it on the chest of drawers]

Nora [to PETER]. If you attempt to wag that sword of yours at anybody again, it'll have to be taken off you, an' put in a safe place away from babies that don't know the danger of them things.

[NORA goes across back, taking off her hat and coat, which she leaves. PETER comes down c., takes up the shirt from the floor, and goes back c. towards room, back]

Peter [at entrance to room, back]. Well, I'm not goin' to let anybody call me a lemon-whiskered oul' swine!

[PETER goes into room, back. FLUTHER moves from the fireplace, L. of couch, to door L., which he begins to open and shut, trying the movement]

Fluther [half to himself, half to NORA]. Openin' an' shuttin' now with a well-mannered motion, like a door of a select bar in a high-class pub.

[NORA takes up the hat and coat from the table, carries them into the room, back, leaves them there, comes out, goes to the dresser, above table R., and puts a few tea things on the table]

Nora [to the COVEY, as she lays table for tea]. An', once for all, Willie, you'll have to thry to deliver yourself from th' desire to practice o' provokin' oul' Pether into a wild forgetfulness of what's proper an' allowable in a respectable home.

The Covey. Well, let him mind his own business, then. Yestherday, I caught him hee-hee-in' out of him an' he readin' bits out of Jenersky's *Thesis on th' Origin, Development an' Consolidation of th' Evolutionary Idea of th' Proletariat*.

Nora. Now, let it end at that, for God's sake; Jack'll be in any minute, an' I'm not goin' to have th' quiet of his evenin' tossed about in an everlastin' uproar between you an' Uncle Pether.

[NORA crosses back to FLUTHER L., and stands on his R.]

Nora [to FLUTHER]. Well, did you manage to settle the lock yet, Mr. Good?

Fluther [opening and shutting the door]. It's betther than a new one, now, Mrs.

Clitheroe; it's almost ready to open and shut of its own accord.

Nora [*giving him a coin*]. You're a whole man. How many pints will that get you?

Fluther [*seriously*]. Ne'er a one at all, Mrs. Clitheroe, for Fluther's on th' wather waggon now. You could stan' where you're stannin' chantin', "Have a glass o' malt, Fluther; Fluther, have a glass o' malt," till th' bells would be ringin' th' ould year out an' th' New Year in, an' you'd have as much chance o' movin' Fluther as a tune on a tin whistle would move a deaf man an' he dead.

[As NORA is opening and shutting the door, MRS. BESSIE BURGESS appears at it. She is a woman of 40, vigorously built. Her face is a dogged one, hardened by toil, and a little coarsened by drink. She looks scornfully and viciously at NORA for a few moments before she speaks]

Bessie. Puttin' a new lock on her door . . . afraid her poor neighbours ud break through an' steal. . . . [*In a loud tone*] Maybe, now, they're a damn sight more honest than your ladyship . . . checkin' th' children playin' on th' stairs . . . gettin' on th' nerves of your ladyship. . . . Complainin' about Bessie Burgess singin' her hymns at night, when she has a few up. . . . [*She comes in half-way on the threshold, and screams*] Bessie Burgess 'll sing whenever she damn well likes!

[NORA tries to shut the door, but BESSIE violently shoves it in, and, gripping NORA by the shoulders, shakes her]

Bessie [*violently*]. You little overdressed throllope, you, for one pin, I'd paste th' white face o' you!

Nora [*frightened*]. Fluther, Fluther!

Fluther [*breaking the hold of BESSIE from NORA*]. Now, now, Bessie, Bessie, leave poor Mrs. Clitheroe alone; she'd do no one any harm, an' minds no one's business but her own.

Bessie. Why is she always thyrin' to speak proud things, an' lookin' like a mighty one in th' congregation o' th' people!

[The COVEY looks up from his book, watches the encounter, but does not leave his seat by the fire]

[NORA sinks down on back of the couch. JACK CLITHEROE enters by door, L. He is a tall, well-made fellow of 25. His face has none of the strength of NORA's. It is a face in which is the desire for au-

thority, without the power to attain it]

Clitheroe [*excitedly*]. What's up? What's afther happenin'?

Fluther. Nothin', Jack. Nothin'. It's all over now. Come on, Bessie, come on.

Clitheroe [*coming to couch and bending over NORA—anxiously*]. What's wrong, Nora? Did she say anything to you?

Nora [*agitatedly*]. She was bargain' out of her, an' I only told her to go up ower that to her own place; an' before I knew where I was, she flew at me, like a tiger, an' tried to guzzle me.

[CLITHEROE goes close to BESSIE, standing in front of the chest of drawers, and takes hold of her arm to get her away]

Clitheroe. Get up to your own place, Mrs. Burgess, and don't you be interferin' with my wife, or it'll be th' worse for you. . . . Go on, go on!

Bessie [*as CLITHEROE is pushing her out*]. Mind who you're pushin', now. . . . I attend me place of worship, anyhow. . . . Not like some of them that go neither church, chapel or meetin' house. . . . If me son was home from the threnches, he'd see me righted.

[FLUTHER takes BESSIE by the arm, and brings her out by the door L. CLITHEROE closes the door behind them, returns to NORA, and puts his arm around her. The COVEY resumes his reading]

Clitheroe [*his arm around her*]. There, don't mind that old bitch, Nora, darling; I'll soon put a stop to her interferin'.

Nora. Some day or another, when I'm here be meself, she'll come in an' do somethin' desperate.

Clitheroe [*kissing her*]. Oh, sorra fear of her doin' anythin' desperate. I'll talk to her to-morrow when she's sober. A tast o' me mind that'll shock her into the sensibility of behavin' herself!

[NORA gets up, crosses to the dresser R., and finishes laying the table for tea. She catches sight of the dungarees on the floor and speaks indignantly to COVEY. CLITHEROE leaves his hat on the chest of drawers, and sits, waiting for tea, on the couch]

Nora [*to COVEY*]. Willie, is that the place for your dungarees?

Covey [*irritably rising, and taking them from the floor*]. Ah, they won't do the floor any harm, will they?

[He carries them up c., into room back, comes back again, down c., and sits by fire. NORA crosses from the table to the fire, gets the teapot from the hob, and returns to the table]

Nora [to CLITHEROE and COVEY]. Tea's ready.

[CLITHEROE and COVEY go to the table and sit down L. of same, COVEY nearest the audience. NORA sits down on R. of table, leaving the chair for PETER below, on same side]

Nora [calling towards room, back]. Uncle Peter, Uncle Peter, tea's ready!

[PETER comes in from room back. PETER is in the full dress of the Irish National Foresters: bright green, gold-braided coat, white breeches, black top boots and frilled, white shirt. He carries a large black slouch hat, from which waves a long white ostrich plume, in his hand. He puts the hat on the chest of drawers beside the sword, he comes down c., goes round front end of table, and sits on the vacant seat facing COVEY on opposite side of the table. They eat for a few moments in silence, the COVEY furtively watching PETER with scorn in his eyes; PETER knows this, and is fidgety]

The Covey [provokingly]. Another cut o' bread, Uncle Peter?

[PETER maintains a dignified silence]

Clitheroe. It's sure to be a great meetin' to-night. We ought to go, Nora.

Nora [decisively]. I won't go, Jack; you can go if you wish.

[A pause]

The Covey [with great politeness, to PETER]. D'ye want th' sugar, Uncle Peter?

Peter [explosively]. Now, are you goin' to start your thryin' an' your twartin' again?

Nora. Now, Uncle Peter, you mustn't be so touchy; Willie has only assed you if you wanted th' sugar.

Peter [angrily]. He doesn't care a damn whether I want th' sugar or no. He's only thryin' to thwart me!

Nora [angrily, to the COVEY]. Can't you let him alone, Willie? If he wants the sugar, let him stretch his hand out an' get it himself!

The Covey [to PETER]. Now, if you want the sugar, you can stretch out your hand and get it yourself!

[A pause]

Clitheroe. To-night is th' first chance that Brennan has got of showing himself off since they made a Captain of him—why, God only knows. It'll be a treat to see him swankin' it at th' head of the Citizen Army carryin' th' flag of the Plough an' th' Stars. . . . [Looking roguishly at NORA] He was sweet on you, once, Nora?

Nora. He may have been. . . . I never liked him. I always thought he was a bit of a thick.

The Covey. They're bringin' nice disgrace on that banner now.

Clitheroe [to COVEY, remonstratively]. How are they bringin' disgrace on it?

The Covey [snappily]. Because it's a Labour flag, an' was never meant for politics. . . . What does th' design of th' field plough, bearin' on it th' stars of th' heavenly plough, mean, if it's not Communism? It's a flag that should only be used when we're buildin' th' barricades to fight for a Workers' Republic!

Peter [with a puff of derision]. P-phuh.

The Covey [angrily, to PETER]. What are you phuhin' out o' you for? Your mind is th' mind of a mummy. [Rising] I betther go an' get a good place to have a look at Ireland's warriors passin' by.

[He goes into room L., and returns with his cap]

Nora [to the COVEY]. Oh, Willie, brush your clothes before you go.

The Covey [carelessly]. Oh, they'll do well enough.

Nora. Go an' brush them; th' brush is in th' drawer there.

[The COVEY goes to the drawer, muttering, gets the brush, and starts to brush his clothes]

The Covey [reciting at PETER, as he does so].

Oh, where's the slave so lowly,
Condemn'd to chains unholy,
Who, could he burst his bonds at first,
Would pine beneath them slowly?

We tread th' land that . . . bore us,
Th' green flag glitters . . . o'er us,
Th' friends we've tried are by our side,
An' th' foe we hate . . . before us!

Peter [leaping to his feet in a whirl of rage]. Now, I'm tellin' you, me young Covey, once for all, that I'll not stick any

longer these titherin' taunts of yours, rovin' around to sing your slights an' slanders, reddenin' th' mind of a man to th' thinkin' an' sayin' of things that sicken his soul with sin! [*Hysterically; lifting up a cup to fling at the Covey*] Be God, I'll—

Clitheroe [*catching his arm*]. Now then, none o' that, none o' that!

Nora [*loudly*]. Uncle Pether, Uncle Pether, UNCLE PETHER!

The Covey [*at the door L., about to go out*]. Isn't that th' malignant oul' varmint! Lookin' like th' illegitimate son of an illegitimate child of a corporal in th' Mexican army!

[*He goes out door L.*]

Peter [*plaintively*]. He's afther leavin' me now in such a state of agitation that I won't be able to do meself justice when I'm marchin' to th' meetin'.

[*NORA jumps up from the table, crosses back end of table to the chest of drawers, back, and takes up PETER's sword*]

Nora. Oh, for God's sake, here, buckle your sword on, an' go to your meetin', so that we'll have at least one hour of peace.

[*PETER gets up from the chair, goes over to NORA, and she helps him to put on his sword*]

Clitheroe. For God's sake, hurry him up out o' this, Nora.

Peter. Are yous all goin' to thry to start to thwart me now?

Nora [*putting on his plumed hat*]. S-s-sh. Now, your hat's on, your house is thatched; off you pop! [*She gently pushes him from her, towards door L.*]

Peter [*going and turning as he reaches the door L.*]. Now, if that young Covey—

Nora. Go on, go on.

[*He goes out door L.*]

[*CLITHEROE goes from the table to the couch and sits down on end nearest the fire, lights a cigarette, and looks thoughtfully into the fire. NORA takes things from the table, and puts them on the dresser. She goes into room, back, and comes back with a lighted shaded lamp, which she puts on the table. She then goes on tidying things on the dresser*]

[*Softly speaking over from the dresser, to CLITHEROE*] A penny for them, Jack.

Clitheroe. Me? Oh, I was thinkin' of nothing.

Nora. You were thinkin' of th' . . . meetin' . . . Jack. When we were courtin' an' I wanted you to go, you'd say, "Oh, to hell with meetin's," an' that you felt lonely in cheerin' crowds when I was absent. An' we weren't a month married when you began that you couldn't keep away from them.

Clitheroe [*crossly*]. Oh, that's enough about th' meetin'. It looks as if you wanted me to go th' way you're talkin'. You were always at me to give up the Citizen Army, an' I gave it up: surely that ought to satisfy you.

Nora [*from dresser*]. Aye, you gave it up, because you got the sulks when they didn't make a captain of you.

[*She crosses over to CLITHEROE, and sits on the couch to his R.*]

Nora [*softly*]. It wasn't for my sake, Jack.

Clitheroe. For your sake or no, you're benefitin' by it, aren't you? I didn't forget this was your birthday, did I? [*He puts his arms around her*] And you liked your new hat; didn't you, didn't you? [*He kisses her rapidly several times*]

Nora [*panting*]. Jack, Jack; please, Jack! I thought you were tired of that sort of thing long ago.

Clitheroe. Well, you're finding out now that I amn't tired of it yet, anyhow. Mrs. Clitheroe doesn't want to be kissed, sure she doesn't? [*He kisses her again*] Little, little red-lipped Nora!

Nora [*coquettishly removing his arm from around her*]. Oh, yes, your little, little red-lipped Nora's a sweet little girl when th' fit seizes you; but your little, little red-lipped Nora has to clean your boots every mornin', all the same.

Clitheroe [*with a movement of irritation*]. Oh, well, if we're goin' to be snotty!

[*A pause*]

Nora. It's lookin' like as if it was you that was goin' to be . . . snotty! Bridlin' up with bitherness, th' minute a body attempts t'open her mouth.

Clitheroe. Is it any wondher, turnin' a tendher sayin' into a meanin' o' malice an' spite!

Nora. It's hard for a body to be always keepin' her mind bent on makin' thoughts that'll be no longer than th' length of your own satisfaction.

[*A pause*]

Nora [*standing up*]. If we're goin' to dhribble th' time away sittin' here like a pair o' cranky mummies, I'd be as well sewin' or doin' something about th' place.

[*She looks appealingly at him for a few moments; he doesn't speak. She swiftly sits down beside him, and puts her arm around his neck*]

Nora [*imploringly*]. Ah, Jack, don't be so cross!

Clitheroe [*doggedly*]. Cross? I'm not cross; I'm not a bit cross. It was yourself started it.

Nora [*coaxingly*]. I didn't mean to say anything out o' th' way. You take a body up too quickly, Jack. [*In an ordinary tone as if nothing of an angry nature had been said*] You didn't offer me evenin' allowance yet.

[*CLITHEROE silently takes out a cigarette for her and himself and lights both*]

[*Trying to make conversation*] How quiet th' house is now; they must be all out.

Clitheroe [*rather shortly*]. I suppose so.

Nora [*rising from the seat*]. I'm longin' to show you me new hat, to see what you think of it. Would you like to see it?

Clitheroe. Ah, I don't mind.

[*NORA hesitates a moment, then goes up c. to the chest of drawers, takes the hat out of the box, comes down c., stands front of the couch, looks into the mirror on the wall below the fireplace, and fixes hat on her head. She then turns to face CLITHEROE*]

Nora. Well, how does Mr. Clitheroe like me new hat?

Clitheroe. It suits you, Nora, it does right enough.

[*He stands up, puts his hand beneath her chin, and tilts her head up. She looks at him roguishly. He bends down and kisses her*]

Nora. Here, sit down, an' don't let me hear another cross word out of you for th' rest o' the night.

[*The two sit on the couch again, CLITHEROE nearest the fire*]

Clitheroe [*his arms round NORA*]. Little red-lipped Nora.

Nora [*with a coaxing movement of her body towards him*]. Jack!

Clitheroe [*tightening his arms around her*]. Well?

Nora. You haven't sung me a song since

our honeymoon. Sing me one now, do . . . please, Jack!

Clitheroe. What song? "Since Maggie Went Away"?

Nora. Ah, no, Jack, not that; it's too sad. "When You Said You Loved Me."

[*Clearing his throat, CLITHEROE thinks for a moment, and then begins to sing. NORA, putting an arm around him, nestles her head on his breast and listens delightedly*]

Clitheroe [*singing verses following to the air of "When You and I Were Young, Maggie"*].

Th' violets were scenting th' woods, Nora,
Displaying their charm to th' bee,
When I first said I lov'd only you, Nora,
An' you said you lov'd only me!

Th' chestnut blooms gleam'd through th'
glade, Nora,
A robin sang loud from a tree,
When I first said I lov'd only you, Nora
An' you said you lov'd only me!

Th' golden-rob'd daffodils shone, Nora,
An' danc'd in th' breeze on th' lea;
When I first said I lov'd only you, Nora,
An' you said you lov'd only me!

Th' trees, birds an' bees sang a song, Nora,
Of happier transports to be,
When I first said I lov'd only you, Nora,
An' you said you lov'd only me!

[*NORA kisses him*]

[*A knock is heard at the door, R.; a pause as they listen. NORA clings closely to CLITHEROE. Another knock, more imperative than the first*]

I wonder who can that be, now?

Nora [*a little nervous*]. Take no notice of it, Jack; they'll go away in a minute.

[*Another knock, followed by the voice of CAPTAIN BRENNAN*]

The Voice of Capt. Brennan. Commandant Clitheroe, Commandant Clitheroe, are you there? A message from General Jim Connolly.

Clitheroe [*taking her arms from round him*]. Damn it, it's Captain Brennan.

Nora [*anxiously*]. Don't mind him, don't mind, Jack. Don't break our happiness. . . . Pretend we're not in. . . . Let us forget everything to-night but our two selves!

Clitheroe [*reassuringly*]. Don't be

alarmed, darling; I'll just see what he wants, an' send him about his business.

Nora [*tremulously—putting her arms around him*]. No, no. Please, Jack; don't open it. Please, for your own little Nora's sake!

Clitheroe [*taking her arms away and rising to open the door*]. Now don't be silly, Nora.

[CLITHEROE opens door, and admits a young man in the full uniform of the Irish Citizen Army—green suit; slouch green hat caught up at one side by a small Red Hand badge; Sam Browne belt, with a revolver in the holster. He carries a letter in his hand. When he comes in he smartly salutes CLITHEROE. The young man is CAPTAIN BRENNAN. He stands in front of the chest of drawers]

Capt. Brennan [*giving the letter to CLITHEROE*]. A dispatch from General Connolly.

Clitheroe [*reading. While he is doing so, BRENNAN'S eyes are fixed on NORA, who droops as she sits on the lounge*]. "Commandant Clitheroe is to take command of the eighth battalion of the I.C.A. which will assemble to proceed to the meeting at nine o'clock. He is to see that all units are provided with full equipment: two days' rations and fifty rounds of ammunition. At two o'clock A.M. the army will leave Liberty Hall for a reconnaissance attack on Dublin Castle.—Com.-Gen. Connolly."

Clitheroe [*in surprise, to CAPT. BRENNAN*]. I don't understand this. Why does General Connolly call me Commandant?

Capt. Brennan. Th' Staff appointed you Commandant, and th' General agreed with their selection.

Clitheroe. When did this happen?

Capt. Brennan. A fortnight ago.

Clitheroe. How is it word was never sent to me?

Capt. Brennan. Word was sent to you. . . . I meself brought it.

Clitheroe. Who did you give it to, then?

Capt. Brennan [*after a pause*]. I think I gave it to Mrs. Clitheroe, there.

Clitheroe. Nora, d'ye hear that?

[NORA makes no answer]

[*Standing c.—there is a note of hardness in his voice*] Nora . . . Captain Brennan says he brought a letter to me from General

Connolly, and that he gave it to you. . . . Where is it? What did you do with it?

[CAPT. BRENNAN stands in front of the chest of drawers, and softly whistles "The Soldiers' Song"]

Nora [*running over to him, and pleadingly putting her arms around him*]. Jack, please Jack, don't go out to-night an' I'll tell you; I'll explain everything. . . . Send him away, an' stay with your own little red-lipp'd Nora.

Clitheroe [*removing her arms from around him*]. None o' this nonsense, now; I want to know what you did with th' letter?

[NORA goes slowly to the couch and sits down again]

[*Angrily*] Why didn't you give me th' letter? What did you do with it? . . . [*Goes over and shakes her by the shoulder*] What did you do with th' letter?

Nora [*flaming up and standing on her feet*]. I burned it, I burned it! That's what I did with it! Is General Connolly an' th' Citizen Army goin' to be your only care? Is your home goin' to be only a place to rest in? Am I goin' to be only somethin' to provide merrymakin' at night for you? Your vanity 'll be th' ruin of you an' me yet. . . . That's what's movin' you: because they've made an officer of you, you'll make a glorious cause of what you're doin', while your little red-lipp'd Nora can go on sittin' here, makin' a companion of th' loneliness of th' night!

Clitheroe [*fiercely*]. You burned it, did you? [*He grips her arm*] Well, me good lady—

Nora. Let go—you're hurtin' me!

Clitheroe. You deserve to be hurt. . . . Any letther that comes to me for th' future, take care that I get it. . . . D'ye hear—take care that I get it!

[*He lets her go, and she sinks down, crying on the couch. He goes to the chest of drawers and takes out a Sam Browne belt, which he puts on, and then puts a revolver in the holster. He puts on his hat, and looks towards NORA*]

[*At door L., about to go out*] You needn't wait up for me; if I'm in at all, it won't be before six in th' morning.

Nora [*bitterly*]. I don't care if you never came back!

Clitheroe [to CAPT. BRENNAN]. Come along, Ned.

[*They go out; there is a pause. NORA pulls the new hat from her head and with a bitter movement flings it to the other end of the room. There is a gentle knock at door L., which opens, and MOLLSEY comes into the room. She is about 15, but looks to be only about 10, for the ravages of consumption have shrivelled her up. She is pitifully worn, walks feebly, and frequently coughs. She goes over and sits down L. of NORA*]

Mollser [to *NORA*]. Mother's gone to th' meetin', an' I was feelin' terrible lonely, so I come down to see if you'd let me sit with you, thinkin' you mightn't be goin' yourself. . . . I do be terrible afraid I'll die sometime when I'm be meself. . . . I often envy you, Mrs. Clitheroe, seein' th' health you have, an' th' lovely place you have here, an' wonderin' if I'll ever be strong enough to be keepin' a home together for a man.

[*The faint sound of a band playing is heard in the distance outside in the street*]

Mollser. Oh, this must be some more of the Dublin Fusiliers flyin' off to the front.

[*The band, passing in the street outside, is now heard loudly playing as they pass the house. It is the music of a brass band playing a regiment to the boat on the way to the front. The tune that is being played is "It's a Long Way to Tipperary"; as the band comes to the chorus, the regiment is swinging into the street by NORA's house, and the voices of the soldiers can be heard lustily singing the chorus of the song*]

It's a long way to Tipperary, it's a long way to go;

It's a long way to Tipperary, to th' sweetest girl I know!

Good-bye, Piccadilly, farewell Leicester Square.

It's a long way to Tipperary, but my heart's right there!

[*NORA and MOLLSEY remain silently listening. As the chorus ends, and the music is faint in the distance again, BESSIE BURGESS appears at door L., which MOLLSEY has left open*]

Bessie [speaking in towards the room]. There's th' men marchin' out into th' dhread

dimness o' danger, while th' lice is crawlin' about feedin' on th' fatness o' the land! But you'll not escape from th' arrow that flieth be night, or th' sickness that wasteth be day. . . . An' ladyship an' all, as some o' them may be, they'll be scattered abroad, like th' dust in th' darkness!

[*BESSIE goes away; NORA steals over and quietly shuts the door. She comes back to the lounge and wearily throws herself on it beside MOLLSEY*]

Mollser [after a pause and a cough]. Is there anybody goin', Mrs. Clitheroe, with a titther o' sense?

ACT TWO

SCENE—A public-house at the corner of the street in which the meeting is being addressed from Platform No. 1. One end of the house is visible to the audience. Part of the counter at the back, L., extending out towards L., occupies one-third of the width of the scene from R. to L. On the counter are glasses, beer-pulls, and a carafe filled with water. Behind the counter, on the back wall, are shelves containing bottles of wine, whisky and beer. At back c. is a wide, high, plate-glass window. Under the window is a seat to hold three or four persons seated. L. are the wide swing-doors. At wall, R., is a seat to hold two persons. A few gaudy-coloured show-cards on the walls.

A band is heard outside playing "The Soldiers' Song," before the CURTAIN rises, and for a few moments afterwards, accompanied by the sounds of marching men.

The BARMAN is seen wiping the part of the counter which is in view. ROSIE REDMOND is standing at the counter toying with what remains of a half of whisky in a wine-glass. She is a sturdy, well-shaped girl of 20; pretty and pert in manner. She is wearing a cream blouse, with an obviously suggestive glad neck; a grey tweed dress, brown stockings and shoes. The blouse and most of the dress are hidden by a black shawl. She has no hat, and in her hair is jauntily set a cheap, glittering, jewelled ornament. It is an hour later.

Barman [wiping counter]. Nothin' much doin' in your line to-night, Rosie?

Rosie. Curse o' God on th' haporth, hardly, Tom. There isn't much notice taken of a pretty petticoat of a night like

this. . . . They're all in a holy mood. Th' solemn-lookin' dials on th' whole o' them an' they marchin' to th' meetin'. You'd think they were th' glorious company of th' saints, an' th' noble army of martyrs thrampin' through th' sthreads of Paradise. They're all thinkin' of higher things than a girl's garthers. . . . It's a tremendous meetin'; four platforms they have—there's one o' them just outside opposite th' window.

Barman. Oh, ay; sure when th' speaker comes [*motioning with his hand*] to th' near end, here, you can see him plain, an' hear nearly everythin' he's spoutin' out of him.

Rosie. It's no joke thyrin' to make up fifty-five shillin's a week for your keep an' laundhry, an' then taxin' you a quid for your own room if you bring home a friend for th' night. . . . If I could only put by a couple of quid for a swankier outfit, everythin' in th' garden ud look lovely—

[In the window, back, appears the figure of a tall man, who, standing on a platform, is addressing a crowd outside. The figure is almost like a silhouette. The BARMAN comes to L. end of counter to listen, and ROSIE moves C. to see and listen too]

Barman [*to ROSIE*]. Whisht, till we hear what he's sayin'.

The Voice of the Man. It is a glorious thing to see arms in the hands of Irishmen. We must accustom ourselves to the thought of arms, we must accustom ourselves to the sight of arms, we must accustom ourselves to the use of arms. . . . Bloodshed is a cleansing and sanctifying thing, and the nation that regards it as the final horror has lost its manhood. . . . There are many things more horrible than bloodshed, and slavery is one of them!

[The figure, moving towards L., passes the window, and is lost to sight and hearing. The BARMAN goes back to wiping of the counter. ROSIE remains looking out of the window]

Rosie. It's th' sacred thruth, mind you, what that man's afther sayin'.

Barman. If I was only a little younger, I'd be plugin' mad into th' middle of it!

Rosie [*who is still looking out of the window*]. Oh, here's th' two gems runnin' over again for their oil!

[The doors L. swing open, and FLUTHER and PETER enter tumultuously. They are hot and hasty with the things they have seen and heard. They hurry across to the counter, PETER leading the way. ROSIE, after looking at them listlessly for a moment, retires to the seat under the window, sits down, takes a cigarette from her pocket, lights it and smokes]

Peter [*spluttering to the BARMAN*]. Two halves. . . . [*To FLUTHER*] A meetin' like this always makes me feel as if I could dhrink Loch Erinn dhry!

Fluther. You couldn't feel anyway else at a time like this when th' spirit of a man is pulsin' to be out fightin' for th' thruth with his feet thremblin' on th' way, maybe to th' gallows, an' his ears tinglin' with th' faint, far-away sound of burstin' rifle-shots that'll maybe whip th' last little shock o' life out of him that's left lingerin' in his body!

Peter. I felt a burnin' lump in me throat when I heard th' band playin' "The Soldiers' Song," rememberin' last hearin' it marchin' in military formation, with th' people starin' on both sides at us, carryin' with us th' pride an' resolution o' Dublin to th' grave of Wolfe Tone.

Fluther. Get th' Dublin men goin' an' they'll go on full force for anything that's thyrin' to bar them away from what they're wantin', where th' slim thinkin' counthry boyo ud limp away from th' first faintest touch of compromization!

Peter [*hurriedly to the BARMAN*]. Two more, Tom! . . . [*To FLUTHER*] Th' memory of all th' things that was done, an' all th' things that was suffered be th' people, was boommin' in me brain. . . . Every nerve in me body was quiverin' to do somethin' desperate!

Fluther. Jammed as I was in th' crowd, I listened to th' speeches patherin' on th' people's head, like rain fallin' on th' corn; every derogatory thought went out o' me mind, an' I said to meself, "You can die now, Fluther, for you've seen th' shadow-dreams of th' last leppin' to life in th' bodies of livin' men that show, if we were without a titther o' courage for centuries, we're vice versa now!" Looka here. [*He stretches out his arm under PETER's face and rolls up his sleeve*] The blood was boilin' in me veins!

[The silhouette of the tall figure again moves into the frame of the window, speaking to the people]

Peter [unaware, in his enthusiasm, of the speaker's appearance, to FLUTHER]. I was burnin' to dhraw me sword, an' wave it over me—

Fluther [overwhelming PETER]. Will you stop your blatherin' for a minute, man, an' let us hear what he's sayin'!

[The BARMAN comes to L. end of the counter to look at the figure in the window; ROSIE rises from the seat, stands and looks. FLUTHER and PETER move towards c. to see and listen]

The Voice of the Man. Comrade soldiers of the Irish Volunteers and of the Citizen Army, we rejoice in this terrible war. The old heart of the earth needed to be warmed with the red wine of the battlefields. . . . Such august homage was never offered to God as this: the homage of millions of lives given gladly for love of country. And we must be ready to pour out the same red wine in the same glorious sacrifice, for without shedding of blood there is no redemption!

[The figure moves out of sight and hearing]

[FLUTHER runs back to the counter and gulps down the drink remaining in his glass; PETER does the same, less rapidly; the BARMAN leaves the end of the counter; ROSIE sits on the seat again]

Fluther [finishing drink, to PETER]. Come on, man; this is too good to be missed!

[FLUTHER rushes across the stage and out by doors L. PETER wipes his mouth and hurries after FLUTHER. The doors swing open, and the COVEY enters. He collides with PETER C. PETER stiffens his body, like a cock, and, with a look of hatred on his face, marches stiffly out by doors L. The COVEY looks scornfully after PETER, and then crosses to the counter. ROSIE sees possibilities in the COVEY, gets up and comes to the counter, a little to the L. of the COVEY]

The Covey [to BARMAN]. Give us a glass o' malt, for God's sake, till I stimulate myself from the shock of seeing the sight that's ather goin' out.

Rosie [slyly, to the BARMAN]. Another

one for me, Tommy; the young gentleman's ordherin' it in the corner of his eye.

[The BARMAN gets a drink for the COVEY, leaves it on the counter; ROSIE whips it up. The BARMAN catches ROSIE's arm, and takes glass from her, putting it down beside the COVEY]

Barman [taking the glass from ROSIE]. Eh, houl' on there, houl' on there, Rosie.

Rosie [angrily, to the BARMAN]. What are you houldin' on out o' you for? Didn't you hear th' young gentleman say that he couldn't refuse anything to a nice little bird? *[To the COVEY]* Isn't that right, Jiggs? *[The COVEY says nothing]* Didn't I know, Tommy, it would be all right? It takes Rosie to size a young man up, an' tell th' thoughts that are thremblin' in his mind. Isn't that right, Jiggs?

[The COVEY stirs uneasily, moves a little farther away, and pulls his cap over his eyes]

[Moving after him] Great meetin' that's gettin' held outside. Well, it's up to us all, anyway, to fight for our freedom.

The Covey [to the BARMAN]. Two more, please. *[To ROSIE]* Freedom! What's th' use o' freedom, if it's not economic freedom?

Rosie [emphasizing with extended arm and moving finger]. I used them very words just before you come in. "A lot o' thricksters," says I, "that wouldn't know what freedom was if they got it from their mother." . . . *[To the BARMAN]* Didn't I, Tommy?

Barman. I disremember.

Rosie [to the BARMAN]. No, you don't disremember. Remember you said, yourself, it was all "only a flash in th' pan." Well, "flash in th' pan, or no flash in th' pan," says I, "they're not goin' to get Rosie Redmond," says I, "to fight for freedom that wouldn't be worth winnin' in a raffle!"

The Covey [contemptuously]. There's only one freedom for th' workin' man: conthrol o' th' means o' production, rates of exchange an' th' means of disthribution. *[Tapping ROSIE on the shoulder]* Look here, comrade, I'll leave here to-morrow night for you a copy of Jenersky's Thesis on the Origin, Development an' Consolidation of the Evolutionary Idea of th' Proletariat.

Rosie [throwing off her shawl on to the counter, and showing an exemplified glad neck, which reveals a good deal of a white

bosom]. If y'ass Rosie, it's heartbreakin' to see a young fella thinkin' of anything, or admirin' anything, but silk thransparent stockin's showin' off the shape of a little lassie's legs!

[The COVEY is frightened, and moves away from ROSIE along the counter, towards R. ROSIE follows, gliding after him in a seductive way]

[Following him] Out in th' park in th' shade of a warm summery evenin', with your little darlin' bridie to be, kissin' an' cuddlin' [she tries to put her arm around his neck], kissin' an' cuddlin', ay?

The COVEY [frightened]. Ay, what are you doin'? None o' that, now; none o' that. I've something else to do besides shinan-nickin' afther Judies!

[The COVEY turns to L. and moves slowly to L., away from ROSIE; she turns with him, keeping him facing her, holding his arm. They move this way to c.]

Rosie. Oh, little ducky, oh, shy little ducky! Never held a mot's hand, an' wouldn't know how to tittle a little Judy! [She clips him under the chin] Tittle him under th' chin, tittle him under th' chin!

The COVEY [breaking away and running out by doors L.]. Aye, go on, now; I don't want to have any meddlin' with a lassie like you!

Rosie [enraged—returning to the seat at the window]. Jasus, it's in a monastery some of us ought to be, spendin' our holidays kneelin' on our adorers, tellin' our beads an' knockin' hell out of our buzzums!

[The voice of the COVEY is heard outside doors L. calling in a scale of notes, "Cuckoo-ooooo." Then the swing-doors open, and PETER and FLUTHER, followed by MRS. GOGAN, come in. MRS. GOGAN carries a baby in her arms]

Peter [in plaintive anger, looking towards the door L.]. It's terrible that young Covey can't let me pass without proddin' at me! Did you hear him murmurin' "cuckoo" when he were passin'?

Fluther [irritably—to PETER]. I wouldn't be everlastin' cockin' me ear to hear every little whisper that was floatin' around about me! It's my rule never to lose me temper till it would be detrimental to keep it. There's nothin' derogatory in th' use o' th' word "cuckoo," is there?

[MRS. GOGAN, followed by PETER, go up to the seat under the window and sit down, PETER to the R. of MRS. GOGAN. ROSIE, after a look at those who've come in, goes out by doors L.]

Peter [tearfully]. It's not the word, it's the way he says it! He never says it straight out, but murmurs it with curious quiverin' ripples, like variations on a flute.

Fluther [standing in front of the seat]. A' what odds if he gave it with variations on a throbhone? [To MRS. GOGAN] What's yours goin' to be, maam?

Mrs. Gogan. Ah, half a malt, Fluther.

[FLUTHER goes from the seat over to the counter]

Fluther [to the BARMAN]. Three halves, Tommy.

[The BARMAN gets the drinks, leaves them on the counter. FLUTHER pays the BARMAN; takes drinks to the seat under the window; gives one to MRS. GOGAN, one to PETER, and keeps the third for himself. He then sits on the seat to the L. of MRS. GOGAN]

Mrs. Gogan [drinking, and looking admiringly at PETER's costume]. The Forest-hers' is a gorgeous dhress! I don't think I've seen nicer, mind you, in a pantomime. . . . Th' loveliest part of th' dhress, I think, is th' osthritchness plume. . . . When yous are goin' along, an' I see them wavin' an' noddin' an' waggin', I seem to be lookin' at each of yous hangin' at th' end of a rope, your eyes bulgin' an' your legs twistin' an' jerkin', gaspin' an' gaspin' for breath while yous are thryin' to die for Ireland!

Fluther [scornfully]. If any o' them is ever hangin' at the end of a rope, it won't be for Ireland!

Peter. Are you goin' to start th' young Covey's game o' proddin' an' twartin' a man? There's not many that's talkin' can say that for twenty-five years he never missed a pilgrimage to Bodenstown!

Fluther [looking angrily at PETER]. You're always blowin' about goin' to Bodenstown. D'ye think no one but yourself ever went to Bodenstown? [FLUTHER emphasizes the word "Bodenstown"]

Peter [plaintively]. I'm not blowin' about it; but there's not a year that I go there but I pluck a leaf off Tone's grave, an' this very day me prayer-book is nearly full of them.

Fluther [scornfully]. Then Fluther has a

vice-versa opinion of them that put ivy leaves into their prayer-books, scabbin' it on th' clergy, an' thryin' to out-do th' haloes o' th' saints be lookin' as if he was wearin' around his head a glitterin' aroree boree allis! [*Fiercely*] Sure, I don't care a damn if you slep' in Bodentown! You can take your breakfast, dinner an' tea on th' grave, in Bodentown, if you like, for Fluther!

Mrs. Gogan. Oh, don't start a fight, boys, for God's sake; I was only sayin' what a nice costume it is—nicer than th' kilts, for, God forgive me, I always think th' kilts is hardly decent.

Fluther [*laughing scornfully*]. Ah, sure, when you'd look at him, you'd wondher whether th' man was makin' fun o' th' costume, or th' costume was makin' fun o' th' man!

Barman [*lover to them*]. Now, then, thry to speak asy, will yous? We don't want no shoutin' here.

[*The swing-doors open and the COVEY, followed by BESSIE BURGESS, come in. They go over and stand at the counter. Passing, BESSIE gives a scornful look at those seated near the window. BESSIE and the COVEY talk together, but frequently eye the group at the window*] Covey [*to the BARMAN*]. Two glasses o' malt.

[*The BARMAN gets the drinks; leaves them on the counter. The COVEY puts one beside BESSIE and keeps the other. He pays the BARMAN*]

Peter [*plaintively*]. There he is now—I knew he wouldn't be long till he folleyed me in.

Bessie [*speaking to the COVEY, but really at the other party*]. I can't for th' life o' me undherstand how they can call themselves Catholics, when they won't lift a finger to help poor little Catholic Belgium.

Mrs. Grogan [*raising her voice*]. What about poor little Catholic Ireland?

Bessie [*lover to MRS. GOGAN*]. You mind your own business, maam, an' stupify your foolishness be gettin' dhrunk.

Peter [*anxiously—to MRS. GOGAN*]. Take no notice of her; pay no attention to her. She's just tormentin' herself towards havin' a row with somebody.

Bessie [*in quiet anger*]. There's a storm of anger tossin' in me heart, thinkin' of all th' poor Tommies, an' with them me own son, dhrrenched in water an' soaked in blood,

gropin' their way to a shatterin' death, in a shower o' shells! Young men with th' sunny lust o' life beamin' in them, layin' down their white bodies, shredded into torn an' bloody pieces, on th' althar that God Himself has built for th' sacrifice of heroes!

Mrs. Gogan [*indignantly*]. Isn't it a nice thing to have to be listenin' to a lassie an' hangin' our heads in a dead silence, knowin' that some persons think more of a ball of malt than they do of th' blessed saints.

Fluther [*deprecatingly*]. Whisht; she's always dangerous an' derogatory when she's well oiled. Th' safest way to hindher her from havin' any enjoyment out of her spite, is to dip our thoughts into the fact of her bein' a female person that has moved out of th' sight of ordinary sensible people.

Bessie [*lover to MRS. GOGAN, viciously*]. To look at some o' th' women that's knockin' about, now, is a thing to make a body sigh. . . . A woman on her own, dhrinkin' with a bevy o' men is hardly an example to her sex. . . . A woman dhrinkin' with a woman is one thing, an' a woman dhrinkin' with herself is still a woman—flappers may be put in another category altogether—but a middle-aged married woman makin' herself th' centre of a circle of men is as a woman that is loud an' stubborn, whose feet abideth not in her own house.

The Covey [*to BESSIE—with a scornful look at PETER*]. When I think of all th' problems in front o' th' workers, it makes me sick to be lookin' at oul' codgers goin' about dhressed up like green-accountered figures gone astray out of a toyshop!

Peter [*angrily*]. Gracious God, give me patience to be listenin' to that blasted young Covey proddin' at me from over at th' other end of th' shop!

Mrs. Gogan [*dipping her finger in the whisky, and moistening with it the lips of her baby*]. Cissie Gogan's a woman livin' for nigh on twenty-five years in her own room, an' beyond biddin' th' time o' day to her neighbours, never yet as much as nodded her head in th' direction of other people's business, while she knows some [*with a look at BESSIE*] as are never content unless they're standin' senthry over other people's doin's!

[*Again the figure appears, like a silhouette, in the window, back, and all hear the voice of the speaker declaim-*

ing passionately to the gathering outside. FLUTHER, PETER and Mrs. GOGAN stand up, turn, and look towards the window. The BARMAN comes to the end of the counter; BESSIE and the COVEY stop talking, and look towards the window]

The Voice of the Speaker. The last sixteen months have been the most glorious in the history of Europe. Heroism has come back to the earth. War is a terrible thing, but war is not an evil thing. People in Ireland dread war because they do not know it. Ireland has not known the exhilaration of war for over a hundred years. When war comes to Ireland she must welcome it as she would welcome the Angel of God!

[The figure passes out of sight and hearing, L.]

The Covey [towards all present]. Dope, dope. There's only one war worth havin': th' war for th' economic emancipation of th' proletariat.

Bessie [referring to Mrs. GOGAN]. They may crow away out o' them; but it ud be fitter for some o' them to mend their ways, an' cease from havin' scouts out watchin' for th' comin' of th' Saint Vincent de Paul man, for fear they'd be nailed lowerin' a pint of beer, mockin' th' man with an angel face, shinin' with th' glamour of deceit an' lies!

Mrs. Gogan [over to BESSIE]. An' a certain lassie standin' stiff behind her own door with her ears cocked listenin' to what's bein' said, stuffed till she's strained with envy of a neighbour thryin' for a few little things that may be got be hard sthrivin' to keep up to th' letter an' th' law, an' th' practices of th' Church!

Peter [to Mrs. GOGAN]. If I was you, Mrs. Gogan, I'd parry her jabbin' remarks be a powerful silence that'll keep her tantalizin' words from penetratin' into your feelin's. It's always better to leave these people to th' vengeance o' God!

Bessie [at the counter]. Bessie Burgess doesn't put up to know much, never havin' a swaggerin' mind, thanks be to God, but goin' on packin' up knowledge accordin' to her conscience: precept upon precept, line upon line; here a little, an' there a little.

[BESSIE, with a vigorous swing of her shawl, turns, and with a quick movement goes c., facing Mrs GOGAN]

[Furiously] But, thanks be to Christ, she knows when she was got, where she was got, an' how she was got; while there's some she knows, decoratin' their finger with a well-polished weddin' ring, would be hard put to it if they were assed to show their weddin' lines!

[Mrs. GOGAN springs up from the seat and bounces to c., facing BESSIE BURGESS. Mrs. GOGAN is wild with anger]

Mrs. Gogan [with hysterical rage]. Y' oul' rip of a blasted liar, me weddin' ring's been well earned be twenty years be th' side o' me husband, now takin' his rest in heaven, married to me be Father Dempsey, in th' Chapel o' Saint Jude's, in th' Christmas Week of eighteen hundhred an' ninety-five; an' any kid, livin' or dead, that Jinnie Gogan's had since, was got between th' bordhers of th' Ten Commandments! . . .

Bessie [bringing the palms of her hands together in sharp claps to emphasize her remarks]. Liar to you, too, maam, y' oul' hardened thresspasser on other people's good nature, wizenin' up your soul in th' arts o' dodgeries, till every dhrop of respectability in a female is dhried up in her, lookin' at your ready-made manœuverin' with th' menkind!

Barman [anxiously leaning over the counter]. Here, there; here, there; speak asy there. No rowin' here, no rowin' here, now.

[FLUTHER comes from the seat, gets in front of Mrs GOGAN, and tries to pacify her; PETER leaves the seat, and tries to do the same with BESSIE, holding her back from Mrs. GOGAN. The positions are: BARMAN behind the counter, leaning forward; BESSIE R.; next PETER; next FLUTHER; next Mrs. GOGAN, with baby in her arms. The COVEY remains leaning on the counter, looking on]

Fluther [trying to calm Mrs. GOGAN]. Now, Jinnie, Jinnie, it's a derogatory thing to be smirchin' a night like this with a row; it's rompin' with th' feelin's of hope we ought to be, instead o' bein' vice versa!

Peter [trying to quiet BESSIE]. I'm terrible dawnsy, Mrs. Burgess, an' a fight leaves me weak for a long time afterwards. . . . Please, Mrs. Burgess, before there's damage done, thry to have a little respect for yourself.

Bessie [with a push of her hand that sends PETER tottering to the end of the counter].

G'way, you little sermonizing, little yella-faced, little consequential, little pudgy, little bum, you!

Mrs. Gogan [*screaming and struggling*]. Fluther, leggo! I'm not goin' to keep an unresistin' silence, an' her scatherin' her festerin' words in me face, stirrin' up every dhrop of decency in a respectable female, with her restless rally o' lies that would make a saint say his prayer backwards!

Bessie [*shouting*]. Ah, everybody knows well that th' best charity that can be shown to you is to hide th' thruth as much as our thrue worship of God Almighty will allow us!

Mrs. Gogan [*frantically*]. Here, houl' th' kid, one o' yours; houl' th' kid for a minute! There's nothin' for it but to show this lassie a lesson or two. . . . [To PETER] Here, houl' th' kid, you.

[MRS GOGAN suddenly rushes over to PETER, standing, trembling with fear, between the end of the counter and the seat under the window. Bewildered, and before he's aware of it, Mrs. GOGAN has put the baby in his arms. MRS. GOGAN rushes back c. and puts herself in a fighting attitude in front of BESSIE]

[To BESSIE, standing before her in a fighting attitude] Come on, now, me loyal lassie, dyin' with grief for little Catholic Belgium! When Jinnie Gogan's done with you, you'll have a little leisure lyin' down to think an' pray for your king an' counthry!

Barman [*coming from behind the counter, getting between the women, and proceeding to push BESSIE towards the door*]. Here, now, since yous can't have a little friendly argument quietly, yous'll get out o' this place in quick time. Go on, an' settle your differences somewhere else—I don't want to have another endorsement on me licence.

[The BARMAN pushes BESSIE towards the doors L., MRS. GOGAN following]

Peter [*anxiously calling to MRS. GOGAN*]. Here, take your kid back over this. How nicely I was picked now for it to be plumped into my arms!

The Covey [*meaningly*]. She knew who she was givin' it to, maybe.

[PETER goes over near to the COVEY at the counter to retort indignantly, as the BARMAN pushes BESSIE out of the doors L. and gets hold of MRS. GOGAN to put her out too]

Peter [*hotly to the COVEY*]. Now, I'm givin' you fair warnin', me young Covey, to quit firin' your jibes an' jeers at me. . . . For one o' these days, I'll run out in front o' God Almighty an' take your sacred life!

Barman [*pushing MRS. GOGAN out after BESSIE*]. Go on, now; out you go.

Peter [*leaving the baby down on the floor c.*]. Ay, be Jasus, wait there, till I give her back her youngster!

[PETER runs to the door L., opens it, and calls out after MRS. GOGAN]

Peter [*calling at the door L.*]. Eh, there, eh! What about the kid? [*He runs back in, c., and looks at FLUTHER and the COVEY*] There, she's afther goin' without her kid—what are we goin' to do with it now?

The Covey [*jeering*]. What are you goin' to do with it? Bring it outside an' show everybody what you're afther findin'.

Peter [*in a panic—to FLUTHER*]. Pick it up, you, Fluther, an' run afther her with it, will you?

Fluther [*with a long look at PETER*]. What d'ye take Fluther for? You must think Fluther's a right gom. D'ye think Fluther's like yourself, destitute of a tither of understandin'?

Barman [*imperatively to PETER*]. Take it up, man, an' run out afther her with it, before she's gone too far. You're not goin' to leave th' bloody thing there, are you?

Peter [*plaintively, as he lifts up the baby*]. Well, God Almighty, give me patience with all th' scornors, tormentors, an' twarters that are always an' ever thryin' to goad me into prayin' for their blindin' an' blastin' an' burnin' in th' world to come!

[PETER, with the baby, goes out of the door L. FLUTHER comes from the front of the window to the counter and stands there, beside the COVEY]

Fluther [*with an air of relief*]. God, it's a relief to get rid o' that crowd. Women is terrible when they start to fight. There's no holdin' them back. [To the COVEY] Are you goin' to have anything?

The Covey. Ah, I don't mind if I have another half.

Fluther [*to the BARMAN*]. Two more, Tommy, me son.

[The BARMAN gets the drinks, FLUTHER pays]

Fluther [*to the COVEY*]. You know there's no conthrollin' a woman when she loses her head.

[ROSIE appears at the doors L. She looks over at the counter, sees the two men, then crosses over to the L. end of the counter, where she stands, with a suggestive look towards FLUTHER]

Rosie [to the BARMAN]. Divil a use o' havin' a thrim little leg on a night like this; things was never worse. . . . Give us a half till to-morrow, Tom, duckey.

Barman [coldly]. No more to-night, Rosie; you owe me for three already.

Rosie [combatively]. You'll be paid, won't you?

Barman. I hope so.

Rosie. You hope so! Is that th' way with you, now?

Fluther [with a long glance at ROSIE, to the BARMAN]. Give her one—it'll be all right.

[The BARMAN gets a drink, and puts it on the counter before ROSIE; FLUTHER pays for it]

Rosie [clapping FLUTHER on the back]. Oul' sport!

Fluther [to COVEY]. Th' meetin' should be soon over, now.

The Covey [in a superior way]. Th' sooner th' better. It's alla lot o' blasted nonsense, comrade.

Fluther. Oh, I wouldn't say it was all nonsense. After all, Fluther can remember th' time, an' him only a dawny chiselur, bein' taught at his mother's knee to be faithful to th' Shan Vok Vok!

The Covey. That's all dope, comrade; th' sort o' thing that workers are fed on be th' Boorzwawzee.

Fluther [a little sharply]. What's all dope? Though I'm sayin' it that shouldn't: [catching his cheek with his hand, and pulling down the flesh from the eye] d'ye see that mark there, undher me eye? . . . A sabre slice from a dragoon in O'Connell Street! [Thrusting his head forward towards ROSIE] Feel that dint in th' middle o' me nut!

Rosie [rubbing FLUTHER'S head, and winking at the COVEY]. My God, there's a holla!

Fluther [putting on his hat with quiet pride]. A skelp from a bobby's baton at a Labour meetin' in th' Phenix Park!

The Covey [sarcastically]. He must ha' hitten you in mistake. I don't know what you ever done for th' Labour movement.

Fluther [loudly]. D'ye not? Maybe, then, I done as much, an' know as much

about th' Labour movement as th' chancers that are blowin' about it!

Barman [over the counter]. Speak easy, Fluther, thry to speak easy.

The Covey [quietly]. There's no necessity to get excited about it, comrade.

Fluther [more loudly]. Excited? Who's gettin' excited? There's no one gettin' excited! It would take something more than a thing like you to fluther a feather o' Fluther. Blatherin', an', when all is said, you know as much as th' rest in th' wind up!

The Covey [emphatically]. Well, let us put it to th' test, then, an' see what you know about th' Labour movement: what's the mechanism of exchange?

Fluther [roaring, because he feels he is beaten]. How th' hell do I know what it is? There's nothin' about that in th' rules of our Thrades Union!

Barman [protestingly]. For God's sake, thry to speak easy, Fluther.

The Covey. What does Karl Marx say about th' Relation of Value to th' Cost o' Production?

Fluther [angrily]. What th' hell do I care what he says? I'm Irishman enough not to lose me head be follyin' foreigners!

Barman. Speak easy, Fluther.

The Covey [contemptuously]. It's only waste o' time talkin' to you, comrade.

Fluther. Don't be comradin' me, mate. I'd be on me last legs if I wanted you for a comrade.

Rosie [to the COVEY, taking FLUTHER'S part]. It seems a highly rediculous thing to hear a thing that's only an inch or two away from a kid, swingin' heavy words about he doesn't know th' meanin' of, an' uppishly thryin' to down a man like Misther Fluther here, that's well flavoured in th' knowledge of th' world he's livin' in.

The Covey [bending over the counter—savagely to ROSIE]. Nobody's askin' you to be buttin' in with your prate. . . . I have you well taped, me lassie. . . . Just you keep your opinions for your own place. . . . It'll be a long time before th' Covey takes any instructions or reprimandin' from a prostitute!

[ROSIE, wild with humiliation, bounds from the end of the counter to c. and with eyes blazing, faces towards the COVEY]

Rosie. You louse, you louse, you! . . . You're no man. . . . You're no man. . . . I'm a woman, anyhow, an' if I'm a prostitute aself, I have me feelin's. . . . Thryin' to put his arm around me a minute ago, an' givin' me th' glad eye, th' little wrigglin' lump o' desolation turns on me now, because he saw there was nothin' doin'. . . . You louse, you! If I was a man, or you were a woman, I'd bate th' puss o' you!

Barman. Ay, Rosie, ay! You'll have to shut your mouth altogether, if you can't learn to speak easy!

[FLUTHER, with a dignified walk, goes over to ROSIE c. and puts a hand on her shoulder]

Fluther [to ROSIE]. Hou! on there, Rosie; hou! on, there. There's no necessity to fluther yourself when you're with Fluther. . . . Any lady that's in th' company of Fluther is goin' to get a fair hunt. . . . This is outside your province. . . . I'm not goin' to let you demean yourself be talkin' to a titherin' chancer. . . . Leave this to Fluther—this is a man's job. . . . [He turns from ROSIE, comes back, crosses the COVEY, then turns and faces him. To the COVEY] Now, if you've anything to say, say it to Fluther; an' let me tell you, you're not goin' to be pass-remarkable to any lady in my company.

The Covey. Sure I don't care if you were runnin' all night ather your Mary o' th' Curlin' Hair, but, when you start tellin' luscious lies about what you done for th' Labour movement, it's nearly time to show y'up!

Fluther [fiercely]. Is it you show Fluther up? G'way, man, I'd beat two o' you before me breakfast!

The Covey [contemptuously]. Tell us where you bury your dead, will you?

Fluther [with his face stuck into the face of the COVEY]. Sing a little less on th' high note, or, when I'm done with you, you'll put a Christianable construction on things, I'm tellin' you!

The Covey. You're a big fella, you are.

Fluther [tapping the COVEY threateningly on the shoulder]. Now, you're temptin' Providence when you're temptin' Fluther!

The Covey [losing his temper, knocking [FLUTHER'S hands away, and bawling]. Easy with them hands, there, easy with them hands! You're startin' to take a little risk when you commence to paw the Covey!

[FLUTHER suddenly springs into the c. of the shop, flings his hat into the corner, whips off his coat, and begins to paw the air like a pugilist]

Fluther [roaring]. Come on, come on, you lowser; put your mitts up now, if there's a man's blood in you! Be God, in a few minutes you'll see some snots flyin' around, I'm tellin' you. . . . When Fluther's done with you, you'll have a vice-versa opinion of him! Come on, now, come on!

[The COVEY squares up to FLUTHER]

Barman [running from behind the counter and catching hold of the COVEY]. Here, out you go, me little bowsey. Because you got a couple o' halves you think you can act as you like. [He pushes the COVEY to the doors L.] Fluther's a friend o' mine, an' I'll not have him insulted.

The Covey [struggling with the BARMAN]. Ay, leggo, leggo there; fair hunt, give a man a fair hunt! One minute with him is all I ask; one minute alone with him, while you're runnin' for th' priest an' th' doctor!

Fluther [to the BARMAN]. Let him go, let him go, Tom: let him open th' door to sudden death if he wants to!

Barman [grappling with the COVEY]. Go on, out you go an' do th' bowsey somewhere else.

[The BARMAN pushes the COVEY out by doors L., and goes back behind the counter. FLUTHER assumes a proud air of victory. ROSIE gets his coat, and helps him to put it on; she then gets his hat and puts it on his head]

Rosie [helping FLUTHER with his coat]. Be God, you put th' fear o' God in his heart that time! I thought you'd have to be dug out of him. . . . Th' way you lepped out without any of your fancy side-steppin'! "Men like Fluther," says I to meself, "is gettin' scarce nowadays."

Fluther [with proud complacency, c.]. I wasn't goin' to let meself be malignified by a chancer. . . . He got a little bit too derogatory for Fluther. . . . Be God, to think of a cur like that comin' to talk to a man like me!

Rosie [fixing on his hat]. Did j'ever!

Fluther. He's lucky he got off safe. I hit a man last week, Rosie, an' he's fallin' yet!

Rosie. Sure, you'd ha' broken him in two if you'd ha' hitten him one clatter!

Fluther [amorously, putting his arm around ROSIE]. Come on into th' snug, me

little darlin', an' we'll have a few dhrinks before I see you home.

Rosie. Oh, Fluther, I'm afraid you're a terrible man for th' women.

[*FLUTHER leads ROSIE to the seat with the round table in front, R. She sits down on the seat. He goes to the counter*]

Fluther [to the *BARMAN*]. Two, full ones, Tommy.

[*BARMAN gets the drinks. FLUTHER brings them over to seat R., leaves them on the table, and sits down beside ROSIE. The swing-doors L. open and CAPTAIN BRENNAN, COMMANDANT CLITHEROE, and LIEUTENANT LANGON enter, and cross quickly to the counter. CAPT. BRENNAN carries the banner of The Plough and the Stars, and LIEUT. LANGON a green, white and orange Tri-colour. They are in a state of emotional excitement. Their faces are flushed and their eyes sparkle; they speak rapidly, as if unaware of the meaning of what they say. They have been mesmerized by the fervency of the speeches*]

Clitheroe [almost pantingly to the *BARMAN*]. Three glasses o' port!

[*The BARMAN brings the drinks, CLITHEROE pays*]

Capt. Brennan. We won't have long to wait now.

Lieut. Langon. Th' time is rotten ripe for revolution.

Clitheroe [to *LIEUT. LANGON*]. You have a mother, Langon.

Lieut. Langon. Ireland is greater than a mother.

Capt. Brennan [to *CLITHEROE*]. You have a wife, Clitheroe.

Clitheroe. Ireland is greater than a wife.

Lieut. Langon. Th' time for Ireland's battle is now—th' place for Ireland's battle is here.

[*The tall, dark figure again appears in the window. The three men stiffen to attention. They stand out from the L. of the counter, BRENNAN nearest counter, then CLITHEROE, then LIEUT. LANGON. FLUTHER and ROSIE, busy with each other, take no notice*]

The Voice of the Man. Our foes are strong, but strong as they are, they cannot undo the miracles of God, who ripens in the heart of young men the seeds sown by the

young men of a former generation. They think they have pacified Ireland; think they have foreseen everything; think they have provided against everything; but the fools, the fools, the fools!—they have left us our Fenian dead, and, while Ireland holds these graves, Ireland, unfree, shall never be at peace!

Capt. Brennan [lifting up the *Plough and the Stars*]. Imprisonment for th' Independence of Ireland!

Lieut. Langon [lifting up the *Tri-colour*]. Wounds for th' Independence of Ireland!

Clitheroe. Death for th' Independence of Ireland!

The Three [together]. So help us God!

[*They lift their glasses and drink together. The "Assembly" is heard on a bugle outside. They leave their glasses on the counter, and hurry out by doors L. A pause. Then FLUTHER and ROSIE rise from the seat, and start to go L. ROSIE is linking FLUTHER, who is a little drunk. Both are in a merry mood*]

Rosie. Are you afraid or what? Are you goin' to come home, or are you not?

Fluther. Of course I'm goin' home. What ud ail me that I wouldn't go?

Rosie [lovingly]. Come on, then, oul' sport.

Officer's Voice [giving command outside]. Irish Volunteers, by th' right, quick march!

Rosie [putting her arm round *FLUTHER* and singing to the air "*Twenty-four Strings to My Bow*"].

I once had a lover, a tailor, but he could do nothin' for me,
An' then I fell in with a sailor as strong an' as wild as th' sea.
We cuddled an' kissed with devotion, till th' night from th' mornin' had fled;
An' there, to our joy, a bright bouncin' boy Was dancin' a jig in th' bed!

Dancin' a jig in th' bed, an' bawlin' for borthther an' bread.
An' there, to our joy, a bright bouncin' boy Was dancin' a jig in th' bed!

[*They go out with their arms round each other*]

Clitheroe's Voice [in command outside]. Dublin Battalion of the Irish Citizen Army, by th' right, quick march!

ACT THREE

SCENE—A corner house of a street of tenements; exterior of house in which the Clitheroes live. It is a tall, gaunt five-storey tenement. Its brick front is dull from weather and age. It juts out from L. more than half-way across stage, showing part of the front elevation, with wide, heavy door, having windows above and on both sides. The windows on L., looking into the rooms of the Clitheroes, are hung with good casement cloth. The others are draped with grimy lace curtains. Stone steps lead from the door to the path on the street. From these steps, on each side of the door are railings to prevent anyone from falling down the area. To the extreme R. the front of another house is merely indicated by the side aspect of a wall with steps leading from the door, on which the wounded LANGON rests later on in the scene. Between the two runs a lane which, upstage, turns to the R. At the corner of the lane, nearest the house shown almost full front, is a street lamp.

As the house is revealed, MRS. GOGAN is seen helping MOLLSER to a chair, which stands on the path beside the railings, at the L. side of the steps. She then wraps a shawl around MOLLSER'S shoulders. It is some months later.

Mrs. Gogan [arranging shawl around MOLLSER]. Th' sun'll do you all th' good in th' world. A few more weeks o' this weather, an' there's no knowin' how well you'll be. . . . Are you comfy, now?

Mollser [weakly and wearily]. Yis, ma; I'm all right.

Mrs. Gogan [bending over her]. How are you feelin'?

Mollser. Betther, ma, better. If th' horrible sinkin' feelin' ud go, I'd be all right.

Mrs. Gogan. Ah, I wouldn't put much pass on that. Your stomach maybe's out of order. . . . Is th' poor breathin' any better, d'ye think?

Mollser. Yis, yis, ma; a lot better.

Mrs. Gogan. Well, that's somethin' anyhow. . . . With th' help o' God, you'll be on th' mend from this out. . . . D'your legs feel any stronger undher you, d'ye think?

Mollser [irritably]. I can't tell, ma. I think so. . . . A little.

Mrs. Gogan. Well, a little aself is somethin'. . . . I thought I heard you coughin'

a little more than usual last night. . . . D'ye think you were?

Mollser. I wasn't, ma, I wasn't.

Mrs. Gogan. I thought I heard you, for I was kep' awake all night with th' shootin'. An' thinkin' o' that madman, Fluther, runnin' about through th' night lookin' for Nora Clitheroe to bring her back when he heard she'd gone to folly her husband, an' in dhread any minute he might come staggerin' in covered with bandages, splashed all over with th' red of his own blood, an' givin' us barely time to bring th' priest to hear th' last whisper of his final confession, as his soul was passin' through th' dark doorway o' death into th' way o' th' wondherin' dead. . . . You don't feel cold, do you?

Mollser. No, ma; I'm all right.

Mrs. Gogan. Keep your chest well covered, for that's th' delicate spot in you . . . if there's any danger, I'll whip you in again. . . .

[MRS. GOGAN crosses to R., goes up the lane, turns and looks R., as if looking down the street]

Oh, here's the Covey an' oul' Peter hurryin' along. [She comes down the lane, and crosses to MOLLSER] God Almighty, sthrange things is happenin' when them two is pullin' together.

[The COVEY and PETER come into the lane R., come down, and stand R.C.]

MRS. GOGAN stands C., near the steps. The two men are breathless and excited]

[To the two men] Were yous far up th' town? Did yous see any sign o' Fluther or Nora? How is things lookin'? I hear they're blazin' away out o' th' G.P.O. That th' Tommies is sthretched in heaps around Nelson's Pillar an' th' Parnell Statue, an' that th' pavin' sets in O'Connell Street is nearly covered be pools o' blood.

Peter. We seen no sign o' Nora or Fluther anywhere.

Mrs. Gogan. We should ha' held her back be main force from goin' to look for her husband. . . . God knows what's happened to her—I'm always seein' her sthretched on her back in some hospital, moanin' with th' pain of a bullet in her vitals, an' nuns thryin' to get her to take a last look at th' crucifix!

The Covey. We can do nothin'. You can't stick your nose into O'Connell Street, an' Tyler's is on fire.

Peter. An' we seen th' Lancers—

The Covey [interrupting]. Throttin' along, heads in th' air; spurs an' sabres jinglin', an' lances quiverin', an' lookin' as if they were assin' themselves, "Where's these blighters, till we get a prod at them," when there was a volley from th' Post Office that stretched half o' them, an' sent th' rest gallopin' away wondherin' how far they'd have to go before they'd feel safe.

Peter [rubbing his hands]. "Damn it," says I to meself, "this looks like business!"

The Covey. An' then out comes General Pearse an' his staff, an', standin' in th' middle o' th' street, he reads th' Proclamation.

Mrs. Gogan. What proclamation?

Peter. Declarin' an Irish Republic.

Mrs. Gogan [with amazement]. Go to God!

Peter. The gunboat *Helga's* shellin' Liberty Hall, an' I hear that people livin' on th' quays had to crawl on their bellies to Mass with th' bullets that were flyin' around from Boland's Mills.

Mrs. Gogan. God bless us, what's goin' to be th' end of it all!

Bessie [opening and looking out of a window]. Maybe yous are satisfied now; maybe yous are satisfied now! Go on an' get guns if yous are men—Johnny get your gun, get your gun, get your gun! Yous are all nicely shanghaied now; th' boyo hasn't a sword on his thigh, now! Oh, yous are all nicely shanghaied now! [She shuts down the window viciously]

Mrs. Gogan [warningly to *Peter* and *the Covey*]. S-s-sh, don't answer her. She's th' right oul' Orange bitch! She's been chantin' "Rule, Britannia" all th' mornin'.

Peter. I hope Fluther hasn't met with any accident, he's such a wild card.

The Covey. Fluther's well able to take care of himself.

Mrs. Gogan [dolefully]. God grant it; but last night I dreamt I seen gettin' carried into th' house a sthretcher with a figure lyin' on it, stiff an' still, dhressed in th' habit of Saint Francis. An' then, I heard th' murmurs of a crowd no one could see sayin' th' litany for th' dead; an' then it got so dark that nothin' was seen but th' white face of th' corpse, gleamin' like a white wather lily floatin' on th' top of a dark lake. Then a tiny whisper thrickled into me ear, sayin', "Isn't the face very like th' face o' Fluther," an' then, with a thremlin' flutther, th' dead lips opened, an', although I couldn't

hear, I knew they were sayin', "Poor oul' Fluther, afther havin' handin' in his gun at last, his shakin' soul moored in th' place where th' wicked are at rest an' th' weary cease from throublin'."

[While *Mrs. Gogan* is speaking, *Peter* wanders up the lane, looks R., then stares; then puts on spectacles and looks again. He turns and shouts at *Mrs. Gogan* and *the Covey*]

Peter [shouting]. Here they are, be God, here they are; just afther turnin' the corner—*Nora* an' *Fluther*!

[*The Covey* runs up the lane and looks R. with *Peter*]

Covey. She must be wounded or something—*Fluther* seems to be carryin' her.

[*Fluther*, half carrying *Nora*, comes in R.; *Nora's* eyes are dim and hollow; her face pale and strained-looking; her hair is tossed and her clothes are dusty. They pass by *Covey* and *Peter*, come down the lane, and cross over to the door of the house C. *Peter* and the *Covey* follow, and stand R. *Mrs. Gogan* goes over solicitously to *Nora*. *Nora* wears a brown mackintosh]

Mrs. Gogan [running over to them]. God bless us, is it wounded y'are, *Mrs. Clitheroe*, or what?

Fluther [confidently]. Ah, she's all right, *Mrs. Gogan*; only worn out from thravellin' an' want o' sleep. A night's rest, now, an' she'll be as fit as a fiddle. Bring her in, an' make her lie down.

Mrs. Gogan [to *Nora*]. Did you hear e'er a whisper o' *Mr. Clitheroe*?

Nora [wearily]. I could find him nowhere, *Mrs. Gogan*. None o' them would tell me where he was. They told me I shamed my husband an' th' women of Ireland be carryin' on as I was. . . . They said th' women must learn to be brave an' cease to be cowardly. . . . Me who risked more for love than they would risk for hate. . . . [Raising her voice in hysterical protest] My Jack will be killed, my Jack will be killed! . . . He is to be butchered as a sacrifice to th' dead!

[*Nora* sinks down on the steps at the door. *Bessie Burgess* opens the window, and shouts at them. They do not look at her]

Bessie. Yous are all nicely shanghaied now! Sorra mend the lassies who have been kissin' an' cuddlin' their boys into th'

sheddin' of blood. Fillin' their minds with fairy tales that had no beginnin', but, please God, 'I'll have a bloody quick endin'! [*She shuts the window with a bang*]

Fluther [*losing control*]. Y' ignorant oul' throllope, you!

Mrs. Gogan [*coaxingly, to NORA*]. You'll find he'll come home safe enough to you, Mrs. Clitheroe. Afther all, there's a power o' women that's handed over sons an' husbands, to take a runnin' risk in th' fight they're wagin'.

Nora. I can't help thinkin' every shot fired 'll be fired at Jack, an' every shot fired at Jack 'll be fired at me. What do I care for th' others? I can think only of me own self. . . . An' there's no woman gives a son or a husband to be killed—if they say it, they're lyin', lyin', against God, Nature, an' against themselves! . . . One blasted hussy at a barricade told me to go home an' not be thryin' to dishearten th' men . . .

Peter [*unctuously*]. You'll have to have patience, Nora. We all have to put up with twarthers an' tormentors in this world.

The Covey. If they were fightin' for anything worth while, I wouldn't mind.

Fluther [*to NORA*]. Nothin' derogatory 'll happen to Mr. Clitheroe. You'll find, now, in th' finish up, it'll be vice versa.

Nora. Oh, I know that wherever he is, he's thinkin' of wantin' to be with me. I know he's longin' to be passin' his hand through me hair, to be caressin' me neck, to fondle me hand an' to feel me kisses clingin' to his mouth. . . . An' he stands wherever he is because he's brave? [*Vehemently*] No, but because he's a coward, a coward, a coward!

Mrs. Gogan. Oh, they're not cowards anyway.

Nora [*with denunciatory anger*]. I tell you they're afraid to say they're afraid! . . . Oh, I saw it, I saw it, Mrs. Gogan. . . . At th' barricade in North King Street I saw fear glowin' in all their eyes. . . . An' in th' middle o' th' sthreet was somethin' huddled up in a horrible tangled heap. . . . An' I saw that they were afraid to look at it. . . . I tell you they were afraid, afraid, afraid!

Mrs. Gogan [*lifting her up from the steps*]. Come on in, dear. If you'd been a little longer together the wrench asundher wouldn't have been so sharp.

Nora [*painfully ascending the steps, helped by MRS. GOGAN*]. Th' agony I'm in

since he left me has thrust away every rough thing he done, an' every unkind word he spoke; only th' blossoms that grew out of our lives are before me now; shakin' their colours before me face, an' breathin' their sweet scent on every thought springin' up in me mind, till, sometimes, Mrs. Gogan, sometimes I think I'm goin' mad!

Mrs. Gogan. You'll be a lot betther when you have a little lie down.

Nora [*turning towards FLUTHER as she is going in*]. I don't know what I'd have done, only for Fluther. I'd have been lyin' in th' sthreets, only for him. . . . [*As she goes in*] They have dhruven away th' little happiness life had to spare for me. He has gone from me for ever, for ever. . . . Oh, Jack, Jack, Jack!

[*As NORA is led in, BESSIE comes out. She passes down the steps with her head in the air; at the bottom she stops to look back. When they have gone in, she takes a mug of milk from under a shawl she is wearing and gives it to MOLLSEY silently. MOLLSEY takes it from her*]

Fluther [*going from c. to the COVEY and PETER, R.*]. Which of yous has the tossers?

The Covey. I have.

[*BESSIE crosses from MOLLSEY to R. She pauses at the corner of the lane, R., to speak to the two men*]

Bessie [*scornfully, to FLUTHER and the COVEY*]. You an' your Leadhers, and their sham-battle soldiers has landed a body in a nice way, havin' to go an' ferret out a bit o' bread, God knows where. . . . Why aren't yous in the G.P.O., if yous are men? It's paler an paler yous are gettin'. . . . A lot of vipers—that's what the Irish people is!

[*BESSIE goes up the lane, turns R., and goes out*]

Fluther [*warningly*]. Never mind her. [*To the COVEY*] Make a start, an' keep us from th' sin of idleness. [*He crosses from R. to MOLLSEY and speaks to her*] Well, how are you to-day, Mollser, oul' son? What are you dhrinkin'? Milk?

Mollser. Grand, Fluther, grand, thanks—yes, milk.

Fluther [*to MOLLSEY*]. You couldn't get a betther thing down you. . . . This turn-up has done one good thing, anyhow; you can't get dhrink anywhere, an' if it lasts a

week I'll be so used to it that I won't think of a pint.

[FLUTHER returns and joins the two men R. The COVEY takes from his pocket two worn coins and a thin strip of wood (or tin) about four inches long. He puts the coins on the strip of wood and holds the strip out from him]

The Covey. What's the bettin'?

Peter. Heads, a juice.

Fluther. Harps, a tanner.

[The COVEY flips the coins from the wood into the air. As they jingle on the ground the distant boom of a big gun is heard. They leave the coins where they are and listen intently]

Fluther [awed]. What th' hell's that?

The Covey [awed]. It's like the boom of a big gun!

Fluther. Surely to God, they're not goin' to use artillery on us!

The Covey [scornfully]. Not goin'! [Vehemently] Wouldn't they use anything on us, man?

Fluther. Aw, holy Christ, that's not playin' th' game!

Peter [plaintively]. What would happen if a shell landed here now?

The Covey [ironically]. You'd be off to heaven in a fiery chariot.

Peter. In spite of all th' warnin's that's ringin' around us, are you goin' to start your pickin' at me again?

Fluther. Go on, toss them again, toss them again. . . . Harps, a tanner.

Peter. Heads, a juice.

[The COVEY tosses the coins as before; they fall on the ground and roll a little.

FLUTHER waves the other two back as they bend over the rolling coins]

Fluther. Let them roll, let them roll—heads be God!

[BESSIE runs in R., runs down the lane towards the three men. She is breathless with excitement. She has a new fox fur round her neck over her shawl, a number of new umbrellas under one arm, a box of biscuits under the other, and she wears a gaudily trimmed hat on her head. She speaks rapidly and breathlessly]

Bessie. They're breakin' into th' shops, they're breakin' into th' shops! Smashin' th' windows, batterin' in th' doors an' whip-pin' away everything! An' th' Volunteers is

firin' on them. I seen two men an' a lassie pushin' a piano down th' sthreet, an' th' sweat rollin' off them thryrin' to get it up on th' pavement; an' an' oul' wan that must ha' been seventy lookin' as if she'd dthrop every minute with th' dint o' heart beatin', thryrin' to pull a big double bed out of a broken shop window! I was goin' to wait till I dhressed meself from th' skin out.

Mollser [to BESSIE, as she is going into the house c.]. Help me in, Bessie; I'm feelin' curious.

[BESSIE leaves the looted things in the house, and, rapidly returning, helps MOLLSEER in]

The Covey [to FLUTHER]. Th' selfishness of that one—she waited till she got all she could carry before she'd come to tell anyone!

Fluther [running over to the door of the house and shouting in to BESSIE]. Ay, Bessie, did you hear of e'er a pub gettin' a shake up?

Bessie [inside]. I didn't hear o' none.

Fluther [in a burst of enthusiasm]. Well, you're goin' to hear of one soon!

The Covey [to FLUTHER, excitedly]. Come on, man, an' don't be wastin' time.

Peter [calling to them as they run up the lane]. E, eh, are yous goin' to leave me here, alone?

[FLUTHER and COVEY halt in middle of the lane, and turn to look and reply to PETER]

Fluther. Are you goin' to leave yourself here?

Peter [anxiously]. Didn't yous hear her sayin' they were firin' on them?

The Covey and Fluther [together]. Well?

Peter. Supposin' I happened to be potted?

Fluther. We'd give you a Christian burial, anyhow.

The Covey [ironically]. Dhressed up in your regimentals.

Peter [to the COVEY, passionately]. May th' all-lovin' God give you a hot knock one o' these days, me young Covey, tuthorin' Fluther up now to be tiltin' at me, an' crossin' me with his mockeries an' jibin'!

[FLUTHER and COVEY run up the lane, and go off R. PETER looks after them and then goes slowly into the house, c.]

[After a slight pause, MRS. GOGAN appears at the door of the house c., push-

ing a pram in front of her. As she gets the pram over the threshold BESSIE appears, catches the pram, and stops MRS. GOGAN'S progress]

Bessie [angrily]. Here, where are you goin' with that? How quick you were, me lady, to clap your eyes on th' pram. . . . Maybe you don't know that Mrs. Sullivan, before she went to spend Easter with her people in Dunboyne, gave me sthricht injunctions to give an occasional look to see if it was still standin' where it was left in th' corner of th' lobby.

Mrs. Gogan [indignantly]. That remark of yours, Mrs. Bessie Burgess, requires a little consideration, seein' that th' pram was left on our lobby, an' not on yours; a foot or two a little to th' left of th' jamb of me own room door; nor is it needful to mention th' name of th' person that gave a squint to see if it was there th' first thing in th' mornin', an' th' last thing in th' stillness o' th' night; never failin' to realize that her eyes couldn't be goin' wrong, be sthretchin' out her arm an' runnin' her hand over th' pram, to make sure that th' sight was no deception! Moreover, somethin's tellin' me that th' runnin' hurry of an inthrest you're takin' in it now is a sudden ambition to use th' pram for a purpose, that a loyal woman of law an' ordher would stagger away from!

[MRS. GOGAN pushes the pram violently down the steps, pulling BESSIE with her, who holds her up again when they reach the street]

Bessie [still holding the pram]. There's not as much as one body in th' house that doesn't know that it wasn't Bessie Burgess that was always shakin' her voice complainin' about people leavin' bassinets in th' way of them that, week in an' week out, had to pay their rent, an' always had to find a regular accommodation for her own furniture in her own room. . . . An' as for law an' ordher, puttin' aside th' harp an' shamrock, Bessie Burgess 'll have as much respect as she wants for th' lion an' unicorn!

Peter [appearing at the door of the house, c.]. I think I'll go with th' pair of yours an' see th' fun. A fella might as well chance it, anyhow.

Mrs. Gogan [taking no notice of PETER, and pushing the pram on towards the lane]. Take your rovin' lumps o' hands from pattin' th' bassinette, if you please, ma'am;

an', steppin' from th' threshold of good manners, let me tell you, Mrs. Burgess, that it's a fat wondher to Jennie Gogan that a lady-like singer o' hymns like yourself would lower her thoughts from sky-thinkin' to sthretch out her arm in a sly-seekin' way to pinch anything driven astray in th' confusion of th' battle our boys is makin' for th' freedom of their counthry!

Peter [laughing and rubbing his hands together]. Hee, hee, hee, hee, hee! I'll go with th' pair o' yours an' give you a hand.

Mrs. Gogan [with a rapid turn of her head as she shoves the pram forward]. Get up in th' prambulator an' we'll wheel you down.

Bessie [to MRS. GOGAN as she halts the pram again]. Poverty an' hardship has sent Bessie Burgess to abide with sthrange company, but she always knew them she had to live with from backside to breakfast time; an' she can tell them, always havin' had a Christian kinch on her conscience, that a passion for thievin' an' pinchin' would find her soul a foreign place to live in, an' that her present intention is quite th' lofty-hearted one of pickin' up anything shaken up an' scattered about in th' loose confusion of a general plundher!

[MRS. GOGAN, BESSIE and the pram run up the lane and go off R. PETER follows, but as he reaches the corner of the lane the boom of the big gun brings him to a sudden halt]

Peter [frightened into staying behind by the sound of the gun]. God Almighty, that's th' big gun again! God forbid any harm would happen to them, but sorra mind I'd mind if they met with a dhrop in their mad endeyvours to plundher an' desthroy.

[He looks down the street from the lane for a moment, then runs to the hall door of the house, c., which is open, and shuts it with a vicious pull; he then goes to the chair in which MOLLIER had sat, sits down, takes out his pipe, lights it and begins to smoke with his head carried at a haughty angle. The COVEY comes in R. and down the lane, staggering with a ten-stone sack of flour on his back. He goes over to the door, pushes it with his head, and finds he can't open it; he turns slightly in the direction of PETER]

The Covey [to PETER]. Who shut th' door? . . . *[He kicks at it]* Here, come on

an' open it, will you? This isn't a mot's hand-bag I've got on me back.

Peter. Now, me young Covey, d'ye think I'm goin' to be your lackey?

The Covey [angrily]. Will you open th' door, y'oul'—

Peter [shouting]. Don't be assin' me to open any door, don't be assin' me to open any door for you. . . . Makin' a shame an' a sin o' th' cause that good men are fightin' for. . . . Oh, God forgive th' people that, instead o' burnishin' th' work th' boys is doin' to-day, with quiet honesty an' patience, is revilin' their sacrifices with a riot of lootin, an' roguery!

The Covey [sarcastically]. Isn't your own eyes leppin' out o' your head with envy that you haven't th' guts to ketch a few o' th' things that God is givin' to His chosen people? . . . Y'oul' hypocrite, if every one was blind you'd steal a cross off an ass's back!

Peter [very calmly]. You're not goin' to make me lose me temper; you can go on with your proddin' as long as you like; goad an' goad an' goad away; hee hee, hee! I'll not lose me temper.

[Somebody opens door and the COVEY goes in]

Covey [inside house, to mock PETER]. Cuckoo-oo!

[PETER gets up from chair in a blaze of passion, and follows the COVEY in, shouting]

Peter [shouting]. You lean, long, lanky lath of a lowsey bastard. [Going in door of house, c.] Lowsey bastard, lowsey bastard!

[MRS. GOGAN and BESSIE, pushing the pram, come in R., come down lane to front of the house, c. BESSIE is pushing the pram, which is filled with loot. MRS. GOGAN carries a tall standard lamp, topped with a wide and bright-coloured shade. The pram is filled with fancy-coloured dresses, and boots and shoes. They are talking as they appear R.]

Mrs. Gogan [appearing R.]. I don't remember ever havin' seen such lovely pairs as them with the pointed toes an' the cuban heels.

Bessie [they are now c., lifting one of the evening dresses from the pram, holding it up admiringly]. They'll go grand with th' dhresses we're afther liftin', when we've

stitched a sthray bit o' silk to lift th' bodices up a little bit higher, so as to shake th' shame out o' them, an' make them fit for women that hasn't lost themselves in th' nakedness o' th' times.

Peter [at door, sourly to MRS. GOGAN]. Ay, you. Mollser looks as if she was goin' to faint, an' your youngster is roarin' in convulsions in her lap.

Mrs. Gogan [snappily]. She's never any other way but faintin'!

[MRS. GOGAN runs into the house with her arm full of things. She comes back, takes up the lamp and is about to go in, when a rifleshot very near is heard. MRS. GOGAN, with lamp, and BESSIE, with pram, rush to the door which PETER, in a panic, has shut]

Mrs. Gogan [banging at the door]. Eh, eh, you cowardly oul' fool, what are you thryin' to shut the door on us for?

[MRS. GOGAN pushes the door open and runs in, followed by BESSIE dragging in the pram. They shut the door. A pause. Then CAPT. BRENNAN, supporting LIEUT. LANGON, comes in L., along the street in front of the house, c. As BRENNAN and LANGON reach c. going R., CLITHEROE, pale and in a state of calm nervousness, appears at L., walking backwards or looking back in the direction from which they've come; he has a rifle held at the ready in his hands. LANGON is ghastly white and now and again his face is twisted in agony]

Capt. Brennan [back to CLITHEROE]. Why did you fire over their heads? Why didn't you fire to kill?

Clitheroe. No, no, Bill; bad as they are, they're Irish men an' women.

[BRENNAN gently lets LANGON recline on the steps of the house indicated to the extreme R., holding him by an arm. CLITHEROE is c., watching LANGON]

Capt. Brennan [savagely]. Irish be damned! Attackin' an' mobbin' th' men that are riskin' their lives for them. If these slum lice gather at their heels again, plug one o' them, or I'll soon shock them with a shot or two meself!

Lieut. Langon [moaningly]. My God, is there ne'er an ambulance knockin' around anywhere? . . . Th' stomach is ripped out o' me; I feel it—o-o-oh, Christ!

Capt. Brennan. Keep th' heart up, Jim; we'll soon get help, now.

[Door of house c. opens and NORA rushes out, dashes down steps into CLITHEROE'S arms at bottom. She flings her arms around his neck. Her hair is down, her face haggard, but her eyes are agleam with happy relief]

Nora [to CLITHEROE]. Jack, Jack, oh, God be thanked. Kiss me, kiss me, Jack; kiss your own Nora.

Clitheroe [kissing her, and speaking brokenly]. My Nora; my little, beautiful Nora, I wish to God I'd never left you.

Nora. It doesn't matter—not now, not now, Jack. It will make us dearer than ever to each other. . . . Kiss me, kiss me again.

Clitheroe. Now, for God's sake, Nora, don't make a scene.

Nora [fervently]. I won't, I won't; I promise, Jack—honest to God.

[BESSIE opens window of house to the R., puts out her head, and shouts at CLITHEROE and BRENNAN]

Bessie [at window]. Has th' big guns knocked all th' harps out of your hands? General Clitheroe'd rather be unlacin' his wife's bodice now, than standin' at a barricade. *[To BRENNAN]* An' the professor of chicken butcherin', there, finds he's up against something a little tougher than his own chickens, an' that's sayin' a lot!

Capt. Brennan [over to BESSIE]. Shut up, y'oul' hag!

Bessie [down to BRENNAN]. Choke th' chicken, choke th' chicken, choke th' chicken!

Lieut. Langon. For God's sake, Bill, bring me some place where me wound 'll be looked after. . . . Am I to die before anything is done to save me?

Capt. Brennan [to CLITHEROE]. Come on, Jack. We've got to get help for Jim, here—have you no thought for his pain an' danger?

Bessie. Choke th' chicken, choke th' chicken, choke th' chicken!

Clitheroe [to NORA]. Loosen me, darling, let me go.

Nora [clinging to him]. No, no, no, I'll not let you go! Come on, come up to our home, Jack, my sweetheart, my lover, my husband, an' we'll forget th' last few terrible days! . . .

Lieut. Langon [appealingly]. Oh, if I'd

kep' down only a little longer, I mightn't ha' been hit! Every one else escapin', an' me gettin' me belly ripped asunder! . . . I couldn't scream, couldn't even scream. . . . D'ye think I'm really badly wounded, Bill? Me clothes seem to be all soakin' wet. . . . It's blood . . . My God, it must be me own blood!

Capt. Brennan [to CLITHEROE]. Go on, Jack, bid her good-bye with another kiss, an' be done with it! D'ye want Langon to die in me arms while you're dallyin' with your Nora?

Clitheroe [to NORA]. I must go, I must go, Nora. I'm sorry we met at all. . . . It couldn't be helped—all other ways were blocked be th' British. . . . Let me go, can't you, Nora? D'ye want me to be unthru to me comrades?

Nora. No, I won't let you go. . . . I want you to be thru to me, Jack. . . . I'm your dearest comrade; I'm your thurst comrade. *[Tightening her arms round CLITHEROE]* Oh, Jack, I can't let you go!

Clitheroe [with anger, mixed with affection]. You must, Nora, you must.

Nora. All last night at the barricades I sought you, Jack. I asked for you everywhere. I didn't think of the danger—I could only think of you. They dhrove me away, but I came back again.

Clitheroe [ashamed of her action]. What possessed you to make a show of yourself, like that! What are you more than any other woman?

Nora. No more, maybe; but you are more to me than any other man, Jack. . . . I couldn't help it. . . . I shouldn't have told you. . . . My love for you made me mad with terror.

Clitheroe [angrily]. They'll say now that I sent you out th' way I'd have an excuse to bring you home. . . . Are you goin' to turn all th' risks I'm takin' into a laugh?

Lieut. Langon. Let me lie down, let me lie down, Bill; th' pain would be easier, maybe, lyin' down. . . . Oh, God, have mercy on me!

Capt. Brennan [encouragingly to LANGON]. A few steps more, Jim, a few steps more; thry to stick it for a few steps more.

Lieut. Langon. Oh, I can't, I can't, I can't!

Capt. Brennan [to CLITHEROE]. Are you comin', man, or are you goin' to make an arrangement for another honeymoon? . . .

If you want to act th' renegade, say so, an' we'll be off!

Bessie [from window]. Runnin' from th' Tommies—choke th' chicken. Runnin' from th' Tommies—choke th' chicken!

Clitheroe [savagely to BRENNAN]. Damn you, man, who wants to act th' renegade? [*To NORA*] Here, let go your hold; let go, I say!

Nora [clinging to CLITHEROE, and indicating BRENNAN]. Look, Jack, look at th' anger in his face; look at th' fear glintin' in his eyes. . . . He, himself's afraid, afraid, afraid! . . . He wants you to go th' way he'll have th' chance of death sthrikin' you an' missin' him! . . .

Clitheroe [struggling to release himself from NORA]. Damn you, woman, will you let me go!

Capt. Brennan [fiercely, to CLITHEROE]. Break her hold on you, man; or go up an' sit on her lap!

[*CLITHEROE tries to break her hold with his right hand (he's holding rifle in the other), but NORA clings to him*]

Nora [imploringly]. Jack, Jack, Jack!

Lieut. Langon [agonizingly]. Brennan, a priest; I'm dyin', I think. I'm dyin'.

Clitheroe [to NORA]. If you won't do it quietly, I'll have to make you! [*To BRENNAN*] Here, hold this gun, you, for a minute.

[*He hands the gun to BRENNAN*]

Nora [pitifully]. Please, Jack. . . . You're hurting me, Jack. . . . Honestly. . . . Oh, you're hurting . . . me! . . . I won't, I won't, I won't! . . . Oh, Jack, I gave you everything you asked of me. . . . Don't fling me from you, now!

[*He roughly loosens her grip, and pushes her away from him, NORA sinks to the steps at the door, and lies there*]

Nora [weakly]. Ah, Jack. . . . Jack. . . . Jack!

Clitheroe [taking the gun back from BRENNAN]. Come on, come on.

[*CLITHEROE hurries over to BRENNAN, catches hold of LANGON'S other arm; they both lift him up from steps, and supporting him, turn into the lane and go off R.*]

[*BESSIE looks at NORA lying on the street, for a few moments, then, leaving the window, she comes out, runs over to NORA, lifts her up in her arms, and carries her swiftly into the house. A short pause, then down the street is*

heard a wild, drunken yell; it comes nearer, and FLUTHER enters, frenzied, wild-eyed, mad, roaring drunk. In his arms is an earthen half-gallon jar of whisky; streaming from one of the pockets of his coat is the arm of a new tunic shirt; on his head is a woman's vivid blue hat with gold lacing, all of which he has looted]

[*The evening begins to darken*]

Fluther [singing in a frenzy, as he comes down the lane].

Fluther's a jolly good fella . . .

Fluther's a jolly good fella . . . up th' rebels!

. . . that nobody can deny!

[*He reels across to L., staggers up the steps of the house, c., and hammers at the door*] Get us a mug, or a jug, or somethin', some o' yours, one o' yours, will yous, before I lay one o' yours out!

[*Rifle firing is heard some distance away and the boom of the big gun.*]

FLUTHER turns from the door, and looks off R.

Bang an' fire away for all Fluther cares. [*He beats at the door*] Come down an' open th' door, some o' yours, one o' yours, will yous, before I lay some o' yours out! . . . Th' whole city can topple home to hell, for Fluther.

[*Inside the house, c., is heard a scream from NORA, followed by a moan*]

[*Singing frantically*] That nobody can deny, that nobody can deny,

For Fluther's a jolly good fella,

Fluther's a jolly good fella,

Fluther's a jolly good fella . . . up th' rebels!

. . . that nobody can deny!

[*His frantic movements cause him to spill some of the whisky out of the jar*] [*Looking down at jar*] Blast you, Fluther, don't be spillin' th' precious liquor! [*He kicks at the door*] Give us a mug, or a jug, or somethin', one o' yours, some o' yours, will yous, before I lay one o' yours out!

[*The door suddenly opens, and BESSIE, coming out, grips him by the collar*]

Bessie [indignantly]. You bowsey, come in ower o' that. . . . I'll thrim your thricks o' dhrunken dancin' for you, an' none of us knowin' how soon we'll bump into a world we were never in before!

Fluther [as she is pulling him in]. Ay, th' jar, th' jar, th' jar. *Mind th' jar!*

[A short pause, then again is heard a scream of pain from NORA. The door opens and MRS. GOGAN and BESSIE are seen standing at it]

[The light gets dim]

Bessie. Fluther would go, only he's too dhrunk. . . . Oh, God, isn't it a pity he's so dhrunk! We'll have to thry to get a docthor somewhere.

Mrs. Gogan. I'd be afraid to go. . . . Besides, Mollser's terrible bad. I don't think you'll get a docthor to come. It's hardly any use goin'.

Bessie [determinedly]. I'll risk it. . . . Give her a little of Fluther's whisky. . . . It's th' fright that's brought it on her so soon. . . . Go on back to her, you.

[MRS. GOGAN goes into the house, and BESSIE softly closes the door. She comes down steps, and is half-way across to R., when rifle-firing and the tok-tok-tok of a machine-gun bring her to a sudden halt. She hesitates for a moment, then tightens her shawl round her, as if it were a shield]

[Softly] O God, be Thou my help in time o' throuble; an' shelther me safely in th' shadow of Thy wings.

[She goes forward, goes up the lane, and goes off R.]

ACT FOUR

SCENE—The living-room of BESSIE BURGESS. It is one of two small attic rooms (the other, used as a bedroom, is on the L.), the low ceiling slopes down towards the back. There is an unmistakable air of poverty about the room. The paper on the walls is torn and soiled. On the R., downstage, is a door. A small window c. back. To L. of window, a well-worn dresser, with a small quantity of Delft. On the L. wall, upstage is a door leading to a bedroom. The door on R. leads to the rest of the house and street. Below door on L. wall, the fireplace. Inside fender is a kettle and saucepan. On the hob a teapot. In front of fire a well-worn armchair. In front of window, back, a little to R., an oak coffin stands on two kitchen chairs. On floor, front of coffin, is a wooden box, on which are two lighted candles in candlesticks. In front of coffin, a little to L., a small kitchen table. At R. end of table, a kitchen chair. In corner where R. and back walls meet, the standard lamp,

with coloured shade, looted in Third Act, stands; beside the lamp, hanging from nail in wall, back, hangs one of the evening dresses. There is no light in the room but that given from the two candles and the fire. The dusk has well fallen, and the glare of the burning buildings in the town can be seen through the windows in the distant sky. The COVEY, FLUTHER and PETER have been playing cards, sitting on the floor by the light of the candles on the box near the coffin. When the CURTAIN rises the COVEY is shuffling the cards, PETER is sitting in a stiff, dignified way opposite him, and FLUTHER is kneeling beside the window, back, cautiously looking out into street. It is a few days later.

Fluther [furtively peeping out of the window]. Give them a good shuffling. . . . Th' sky's gettin' reddher an' reddher. . . . You'd think it was afire. . . . Half o' th' city must be burnin'.

The Covey [warningly]. If I was you, Fluther, I'd keep away from that window. . . . It's dangerous, an', besides, if they see you, you'll only bring a nose on th' house.

Peter [anxiously]. Yes; an' he knows we had to leave our own place th' way they were riddlin' it with machine-gun fire. . . . He'll keep on pimpin' an' pimpin' there, till we have to fly out o' this place too.

Fluther [ironically to PETER]. If they make any attack here, we'll send you out in your green an' glory uniform, shakin' your sword over your head, an' they'll fly before you as th' Danes flew before Brian Boru!

The Covey [placing the cards on the floor, after shuffling them]. Come on, an' cut.

[FLUTHER creeps, L. end of table, over to where COVEY and PETER are seated, and squats down on floor between them]

[Having dealt the cards] Spuds up again.

[NORA moans feebly in room on L. They listen for a moment]

Fluther. There, she's at it again. She's been quiet for a good long time, all th' same.

The Covey. She was quiet before, sure, an' she broke out again worse than ever. . . . What was led that time?

Peter [impatently]. Thray o' Hearts, Thray o' Hearts, Thray o' Hearts.

Fluther. It's damned hard lines to think of her dead-born kiddie lyin' there in th'

arms o' poor little Mollser. Mollser snuffed it, sudden too, afther all.

The Covey. Sure she never got any care. How could she get it, an' th' mother out day and night lookin' for work, an' her consumptive husband leavin' her with a baby to be born before he died.

Voices [in a lilting chant to the L. in an outside street]. Red Cr . . . oss, Red Cr . . . oss! . . . Ambu . . . lance, Ambu . . . lance!

The Covey [to FLUTHER]. Your deal, Fluther.

Fluther [shuffling and dealing the cards]. It'll take a lot out o' Nora—if she'll ever be th' same.

The Covey. Th' docthor thinks she'll never be th' same; thinks she'll be a little touched here. [*He touches his forehead*] She's ramblin' a lot; thinkin' she's out in th' counthry with Jack; or, gettin' his dinner ready for him before he comes home; or, yellin' for her kiddie. All that, though, might be th' chloroform she got. . . . I don't know what we'd have done only for oul' Bessie: up with her for th' past three nights, hand runnin'.

Fluther [approvingly]. I always knew there was never anything really derogatory wrong with poor Bessie. [*Suddenly catching PETER'S arm as he is taking a trick*] Eh, houl' on there, don't be so damn quick—that's my thrick!

Peter [resentfully]. What's your thrick? It's my thrick, man.

Fluther [loudly]. How is it your thrick?

Peter [answering as loudly]. Didn't I lead th' deuce!

Fluther. You must be gettin' blind, man; don't you see th' ace?

Bessie [appearing at door of room, L.; in a tense whisper]. D'ye want to waken her again on me, when she's just gone asleep? If she wakes will yous come an' mind her? If I hear a whisper out o' one o' yous again, I'll . . . gut yous!

The Covey [in a whisper]. S-s-s-h. She can hear anything above a whisper.

Peter [looking up at the ceiling]. Th' gentle an' merciful God 'll give th' pair o' yous a scawldin, an' a scarifyin' one o' these days!

[*FLUTHER takes a bottle of whisky from his pocket, and takes a drink*]

The Covey [to FLUTHER]. Why don't

you spread that out, man, an' thry to keep a sup for to-morrow?

Fluther. Spread it out? Keep a sup for to-morrow? How th' hell does a fella know there'll be any to-morrow? If I'm goin' to be whipped away, let me be whipped away when it's empty, an' not when it's half-full!

[*BESSIE comes in a tired way from door of room L., down to armchair by fire, and sits down*]

[*Over to BESSIE*] Well, how is she now, Bessie?

Bessie. I left her sleeping quietly. When I'm listenin' to her babblin', I think she'll never be much better than she is. Her eyes have a hauntin' way of lookin' in instead of lookin' out, as if her mind had been lost alive in madly minglin' memories of th' past. . . . [*Sleepily*] Crushin' her thoughts . . . together . . . in a fierce . . . an' fanciful . . . [*she nods her head and starts wakefully*] idea that dead things are livin', an' livin' things are dead. . . . [*With a start*] Was that a scream I heard her give? [*Re-assured*] Blessed God, I think I hear her screamin' every minute! An' it's only there with me that I'm able to keep awake.

The Covey. She'll 'sleep, maybe, for a long time, now. Ten here.

Fluther [gathering up cards]. Ten here. If she gets a long sleep, she might be all right. Peter's th' lone five.

The Covey [suddenly]. Whisht! I think I hear somebody movin' below. Whoever it is, he's comin' up.

[*A pause. Then the door, R. opens, and CAPT. BRENNAN comes timidly in. He has changed his uniform for a suit of civies. His eyes droop with the heaviness of exhaustion; his face is pallid and drawn. His clothes are dusty and stained here and there with mud. He leans heavily on the back of a chair R. end of table*]

Capt. Brennan. Mrs. Clitheroe; where's Mrs. Clitheroe? I was told I'd find her here.

Bessie. What d'ye want with Mrs. Clitheroe?

Capt. Brennan. I've a message, a last message for her from her husband.

Bessie. Killed! He's not killed, is he!

Capt. Brennan [sinking stiffly and painfully on to a chair]. In th' Imperial Hotel; we fought till th' place was in flames. He was shot through th' arm, an' then through

th' lung. . . . I could do nothin' for him—only watch his breath comin' an' goin' in quick, jerky gasps, an' a tiny sthream o' blood thricklin' out of his mouth down over his lower lip. . . . I said a prayer for th' dyin', an' twined his Rosary beads around his fingers. . . . Then I had to leave him to save meself. . . . [*He shows some holes in his coat*] Look at th' way a machine-gun tore at me coat, as I belted out o' th' buildin' an' darted across th' sthreet for shelter. . . . An' then, I seen The Plough an' th' Stars fallin' like a shot as th' roof crashed in, an' where I'd left poor Jack was nothin' but a leppin' spout o' flame!

Bessie [with partly repressed vehemence]. Ay, you left him! You twined his Rosary beads round his fingers, an' then, you run like a hare to get out o' danger!

Capt. Brennan [defensively]. I took me chance as well as him. . . . He took it like a man. His last whisper was to "Tell Nora to be brave; that I'm ready to meet my God, an' that I'm proud to die for Ireland." An' when our General heard it he said that "Commandant Clitheroe's end was a gleam of glory." Mrs. Clitheroe's grief will be a joy when she realizes that she has had a hero for a husband.

Bessie. If you only seen her, you'd know to th' differ.

[*NORA appears at door, L. She is clad only in her nightdress and slippers; her hair, uncared for some days, is hanging in disorder over her shoulders. Her pale face looks paler still because of a vivid red spot on the tip of each cheek. Her eyes are glimmering with the light of incipient insanity; her hands are nervously fiddling with her nightgown. She halts at the door for a moment, looks vacantly around the room, and then comes slowly in. The rest do not notice her till she speaks. BESSIE has fallen asleep in chair*]

PETER, COVEY and FLUTHER stop their card-playing and watch her

Nora [roaming slowly towards R. to back of table]. No . . . not there, Jack . . . I feel very, very tired . . . [*Passing her hand across her eyes*] Curious mist on my eyes. Why don't you hold my hand, Jack. . . . [*Excitedly*] No, no, Jack, it's not: can't you see it's a goldfinch? Look at the black satiny wings, with the gold bars, an' th' splash of crimson on its head. . . . [*Wearily*]

Something ails me, something ails me. . . . [*Frightened*] You're goin' away, an' I can't follow you! [*She wanders back to L. end of table*] I can't follow you. [*Crying out*] Jack, Jack, Jack!

[*BESSIE wakes with a start, sees NORA, gets up and runs to her*]

Bessie [putting arm round NORA]. Mrs. Clitheroe, aren't you a terrible woman to get up out o' bed. . . . You'll get cold if you stay here in them clothes.

Nora [monotonously]. Cold? I'm feelin' very cold . . . it's chilly out here in th' country. [*Looking around, frightened*] What place is this? Where am I?

Bessie [coaxingly]. You're all right, Nora; you're with friends, an' in a safe place. Don't you know your uncle an' your cousin, an' poor ol' Fluther?

Peter [rising to go over to NORA]. Nora, darlin', now—

Fluther [puking him back]. Now, leave her to Bessie, man. A crowd 'll only make her worse.

Nora [thoughtfully]. There is something I want to remember, an' I can't. [*With agony*] I can't, I can't, I can't! My head, my head! [*Suddenly breaking from BESSIE, and running over to the men, and gripping FLUTHER by the shoulders*] Where is it? Where's my baby? Tell me where you've put it, where've you hidden it? My baby, my baby; I want my baby! My head, my poor head. . . . Oh, I can't tell what is wrong with me. [*Screaming*] Give him to me, give me my husband!

Bessie. Blessin' o' God on us, isn't this pitiful!

Nora [struggling with BESSIE]. I won't go away for you; I won't. Not till you give me back my husband. [*Screaming*] Murderers, that's what yous are; murderers, murderers!

[*BESSIE gently, but firmly, pulls her from FLUTHER, and tries to lead her to room, L.*]

Bessie [tenderly]. Ss-s-sh. We'll bring Mr. Clitheroe back to you, if you'll only lie down an' stop quiet. . . . [*Trying to lead her in*] Come on, now, Nora, an' I'll sing something to you.

Nora. I feel as if my life was thryin' to force its way out of my body. . . . I can hardly breathe . . . I'm frightened, I'm frightened, I'm frightened! For God's sake,

don't leave me, Bessie. Hold my hand, put your arms around me!

Fluther [to BRENNAN]. Now you can see th' way she is, man.

Peter. An' what way would she be if she heard Jack had gone west?

The Covey [to PETER, warningly]. Shut up, you, man!

Bessie [to NORA]. We'll have to be brave, an' let patience clip away th' heaviness of th' slow-movin' hours, rememberin' that sorrow may endure for th' night, but joy cometh in th' mornin'. . . . Come on in, an' I'll sing to you, an' you'll rest quietly.

Nora [stopping suddenly on her way to the room]. Jack an' me are goin' out somewhere this evenin'. Where I can't tell. Isn't it curious I can't remember. . . . [Screaming, and pointing R.] He's there, he's there, an they won't give him back to me!

Bessie. S-ss-s-h, darlin', s-ssh. I won't sing to you, if you're not quiet.

Nora [nervously holding BESSIE]. Hold my hand, hold my hand, an' sing to me, sing to me!

Bessie. Come in an' lie down, an' I'll sing to you.

Nora [vehemently]. Sing to me, sing to me; sing, sing!

Bessie [singing as she leads NORA into room, L].

Lead, kindly light, amid th' encircling gloom,

Lead Thou me on.

Th' night is dark an' I am far from home,

Lead Thou me on.

[Leading NORA, BESSIE goes into room, L.]

[Singing softly inside room, L.]

Keep thou my feet, I do not ask to see Th' distant scene—one step enough for me.

Covey [to BRENNAN]. Now that you've seen how bad she is, an' that we daren't tell her what has happened till she's better, you'd best be slippin' back to where you come from.

Capt. Brennan. There's no chance o' slippin' back now, for th' military are everywhere: a fly couldn't get through. I'd never have got here, only I managed to change me uniform for what I'm wearin'. . . . I'll have to take me chance, an' thry to lie low here for a while.

The Covey [frightened]. There's no place here to lie low. Th' Tommies 'll be hoppin' in here, any minute!

Peter [aghast]. An' then we'd all be shanghaied!

The Covey. Be God, there's enough afther happenin' to us!

Fluther [warningly, as he listens]. Whisht, whisht, th' whole o' yous. I think I heard th' clang of a rifle butt on th' floor of th' hall below. [All alertness] Here, come on with th' cards again. I'll deal. [He shuffles and deals the cards to all] Clubs up. [To BRENNAN] Thry to keep your hands from shakin', man. You lead, Peter. [As PETER throws out a card] Four o' Hearts led.

[Heavy steps are heard coming up stairs, outside door R. The door opens and CORPORAL STODDART of the Wiltshires enters in full war kit—steel helmet, rifle, bayonet and trench tools. He stands near door R., looks around the room, and at the men who go on silently playing cards. A pause]

[Gathering up cards, and breaking the silence] Two tens an' a five.

Corporal Stoddart. 'Ello. [Indicating the coffin] This the stiff?

The Covey. Yis.

Corporal Stoddart. Who's gowing with it? Ownly one allowed to gow with it, you knaow.

The Covey. I dunno.

Corporal Stoddart. You dunnow?

The Covey. I dunno.

Bessie [coming into the room]. She's afther slippin' off to sleep again, thanks be to God. I'm hardly able to keep me own eyes open. [To the soldier] Oh, are yous goin' to take away poor little Mollser?

Corporal Stoddart. Ay; 'oo's agowing with 'er?

Bessie. Oh, th' poor mother, o' course. God help her, it's a terrible blow to her!

Fluther. A terrible blow? Sure, she's in her element now, woman, mixin' earth to earth, an' ashes t'ashes, an' dust to dust, an' revellin' in plumes an' hearses, last days an' judgements!

Bessie [falling into chair by the fire]. God bless us! I'm jaded!

Corporal Stoddart. Was she plugged?

Covey [shortly]. No; died of consumption.

Corporal Stoddart [carelessly]. Ow, is that all—thought she might 'ave been plugged.

Covey [indignantly]. Is that all! Isn't it enough? D'ye know, comrade, that more

die o' consumption than are killed in the war? An' it's all because of th' system we're livin' undher.

Corporal Stoddart. Ow, I know. I'm a Socialist, myself, but I 'as to do my dooty.

Covey [ironically]. Dooty! Th' only dooty of a Socialist is th' emancipation of th' workers.

Corporal Stoddart. Ow, a man's a man, an' 'e 'as to fight for 'is country, 'asn't 'e?

Fluther [aggressively]. You're not fightin' for your country here, are you?

Peter [anxiously, to FLUTHER]. Ay, ay, Fluther, none o' that, none o' that!

The Covey. Fight for your country! Did y'ever read, comrade, Jenersky's *Thesis on the Origin, Development an' Consolidation of th' Evolutionary Idea of the Proletariat*?

Corporal Stoddart [good-humouredly]. Ow, cheese it, Paddy, cheese it!

Bessie [sleepily]. How is things in th' town, Tommy?

Corporal Stoddart. Ow, I think it's nearly over. We've got 'em surrounded, an' we're closing in on the blighters. It was only a bit of a dorg-fight.

[Outside in the street is heard the sharp ping of a sniper's rifle, followed by a squeal of pain]

Voices [to the L. in a chant, outside in street]. Red Cr . . . oss, Red Cr . . . oss! Ambu . . . lance, Ambu . . . lance!

Corporal Stoddart [going up R. and looking out of window, back]. Christ, there's another of our men 'it by the blarsted sniper! 'E's knocking abaht 'ere somewhere. *[Venomously]* Gord, wen we gets the blighter, we'll give 'im the cold steel, we will. We'll jab the belly aht of 'im, we will!

[Mrs. GOGAN enters tearfully by door R.; she is a little proud of the importance of being connected with death]

Mrs. Gogan [to FLUTHER]. I'll never forget what you done for me, Fluther, goin' around at th' risk of your life settlin' everything with th' undhertaker an' th' cemetery people. When all me own were afraid to put their noses out, you plunged like a good one through hummin' bullets, an' they knockin' fire out o' th' road, tinklin' through th' frightened windows, an' splashin' themselves to pieces on th' walls! An' you'll find, that Mollser in th' happy place she's gone to, won't forget to whisper, now an' again, th' name o' Fluther.

[CORPORAL STODDART comes from window down R. to door R., and stands near the door]

Corporal Stoddart [to Mrs. GOGAN]. Git it aht, mother, git it aht.

Bessie [from the chair]. It's excusin' me you'll be, Mrs. Gogan, for not stannin' up, seein' I'm shaky on me feet for want of a little sleep, an' not desirin' to show any disrespect to poor little Mollser.

Fluther. Sure, we all know, Bessie, that it's vice versa with you.

Mrs. Gogan [to BESSIE]. Indeed, it's meself that has well chronicled, Mrs. Burgess, all your gentle hurryin's to me little Mollser, when she was alive, bringin' her somethin' to dhrink, or somethin' t'eat, an' never passin' her without lifting up her heart with a delicate word o' kindness.

Corporal Stoddart [impatiently, but kindly]. Git it aht, git it aht, mother.

[The men rise from their card-playing; FLUTHER and BRENNAN go R. to R. end of coffin; PETER and COVEY go L. of table to L. end of coffin. One of them take box and candles out of way. They carry coffin down R. and out by door R., CORPORAL STODDART watching them. MRS. GOGAN follows the coffin out]

[A pause. CORPORAL STODDART, at door R., turns towards BESSIE]

[To BESSIE, who is almost asleep] 'Ow many men is in this 'ere 'ouse? *[No answer. Loudly]* 'Ow many men is in this 'ere 'ouse?

Bessie [waking with a start]. God, I was nearly asleep! . . . How many men? Didn't you see them?

Corporal Stoddart. Are they all that are in the 'ouse?

Bessie [sleepily]. Oh, there's none higher up, but there may be more lower down. Why?

Corporal Stoddart. All men in the district 'as to be sniped up. Somebody's givin' 'elp to the snipers, an' we 'as to tike precautions. If I 'ad my wy I'd mike 'em all join up an' do their bit! But I suppose they an' you are all Shinnars.

Bessie [who has been sinking into sleep, waking up to a sleepy vehemence]. Bessie Burgess is no Shinner, an' never had no thruck with anything spotted be th' fingers o' th' Fenians. But always made it her business to harness herself for Church when-

ever she knew that God Save The King was goin' to be sung at t'end of th' service; whose only son went to th' front in th' first contingent of the Dublin Fusiliers, an' that's on his way home carryin' a shatthered arm that he got fightin' for his King an' counthry!

[BESSIE's head sinks slowly forward again. Door, R., opens and PETER comes in, his body stiff, and his face contorted with anger. He goes up R., to back, and paces angrily from side to side. COVEY, with a sly grin on his face, and FLUTHER follow PETER. FLUTHER goes to L. and COVEY goes to R. end of table. BRENNAN follows in and sinks to back of table to L. corner between dresser and door, L. CORPORAL STODDART remains standing a little in from door R.]

Fluther [after an embarrassing pause]. Th' air in th' sthreet outside's shakin' with the firin' o' rifles, an' machine-guns. It must be a hot shop in th' middle o' th' scrap.

Corporal Stoddart. We're pumping lead in on 'em from every side, now; they'll soon be shoving up th' white flag.

Peter [with a shout at FLUTHER and COVEY]. I'm tellin' you either o' yous two lowwers 'ud make a better hearseman than Peter! proddin' an' pokin' at me an' I helpin' to carry out a corpse!

Fluther [provokingly]. It wasn't a very derogatory thing for th' Covey to say that you'd make a fancy hearseman, was it?

Peter [furiously]. A pair o' redjesthered, bowseys pondherin' from mornin' till night on how they'll get a chance to break a gap through th' quiet nature of a man that's always endeavourin' to chase out of him any sthray thought of venom against his fellow-man!

The Covey. Oh, shut it, shut it, shut it!

Peter [furiously]. As long as I'm a livin' man, responsible for me thoughts, words an' deeds to th' Man above, I'll feel meself instituted to fight again' th' sliddherin' ways of a pair o' picaroons, whisperin', concurrin', concoctin', an' conspirin' together to render me unconscious of th' life I'm thryin' to live!

Corporal Stoddart [dumbfounded]. What's wrong, Paddy; wot 'ave they done to you?

Peter [savagely to the CORPORAL]. You

mind your own business! What's it got to do with you, what's wrong with me?

Bessie [in a sleepy murmur]. Will you thry to conthrol yourselves into quietness? Yous'll waken her . . . up . . . on . . . me . . . again. [She sleeps]

Fluther [coming c.]. Come on, boys, to th' cards again, an' never mind him.

Corporal Stoddart. No use of you going to start cards; you'll be going aht of 'ere, soon as Sergeant comes.

Fluther [in surprise]. Goin out o' here? An' why're we goin' out o' here?

Corporal Stoddart. All men in district 'as to be rounded up, an' 'eld in till the scrap is over.

Fluther [concerned]. An' where're we goin' to be held in?

Corporal Stoddart. They're puttin' them in a church.

Covey [astounded]. A church?

Fluther. What sort of a church? Is it a Protestan' church?

Corporal Stoddart. I dunno; I suppose so.

Fluther [in dismay]. Be God, it'll be a nice thing to be stuck all night in a Protestan' church!

Corporal Stoddart. If I was you, I'd bring the cards—you might get a chance of a game.

Fluther [hesitant]. Ah, no, that wouldn't do . . . I wondher. . . . [After a moment's thought] Ah, I don't think we'd be doin' anything derogatory be playin' cards in a Protestan' church.

Corporal Stoddart. If I was you I'd bring a little snack with me; you might be glad of it before the morning. [Lalting]

Oh, I do like a snice mince pie,

Oh, I do like a snice mince pie.

[Again the snap of the sniper's rifle rings out, followed by a scream of pain.

CORPORAL STODDART goes pale, runs up R. to near window, c., with his rifle at the ready]

Voices [in street to R., chanting]. Red Cr . . . oss . . . Red Cr . . . oss! Ambu . . . lance . . . Ambu . . . lance!

[The door R. is dashed open, and SERGEANT TINLEY, pale, agitated, and angry, comes rapidly in. He stands inside the door, glaring at men in the room. CORPORAL STODDART swings round at the ready as TINLEY enters and lets

his rifle drop when he sees the SERGEANT]

Corporal Stoddart [to SERGEANT]. One of our men 'it again, Sergeant?

Sergeant Tinley [angrily]. Private Taylor: got it right through the chest, 'e did; an' 'ole in front as ow you could put your 'and through, an' arf 'is back blown awy! Dum-dum bullets they're using. Gang of assassins potting at us from behind roofs. That's not plying the game: why don't they come into the open and fight fair?

Fluther [unable to stand the slight, facing SERGEANT]. Fight fair! A few hundhred scrawls o' chaps with a couple o' guns an' Rosary beads, again' a hundhred thousand thrained men with horse, fut an' artillery. . . . [To others in room] An' he wants us to fight fair! [To SERGEANT] D'ye want us to come out in our skins an' throw stones?

Sergeant Tinley [to CORPORAL]. Are these four all that are 'ere?

Corporal Stoddart. Four; that's hall, Sergeant.

Sergeant Tinley [roughly]. Come on, then, get the blighters aht. [To the men] 'Ere, 'op it aht! Aht into the street with you, an' if another of our men goes west, you go with 'im. [He catches FLUTHER by the arm] Go on, git aht!

Fluther [pulling himself free]. Eh, who are you chuckin', eh?

Sergeant Tinley [roughly]. Go on, git aht, you blighter.

Fluther [truculently]. Who're you callin' a blighter to, eh? I'm a Dublin man, born an' bred in th' City, see?

Sergeant Tinley. Oh, I don't care if you were Bryan Buroo; git aht, git aht.

Fluther [pausing as he reaches door R., to face the SERGEANT defiantly]. Jasus, you an' your guns! Leave them down, an' I'd beat th' two of yous without sweatin'!

[Shepherded by the two soldiers, who follow them out, PETER, COVEY, FLUTHER and BRENNAN go out by door R.]

[BESSIE is sleeping heavily on the chair by the fire. After a pause NORA appears at door L., in her nightdress. Remaining at door for a few moments she looks vaguely around the room. She then comes in quietly, goes over to the fire, pokes it and puts the kettle on. She thinks for a few moments, pressing her hand to her forehead. She looks questioningly at the fire, and then at

the press at back. She goes to the dresser L., back, opens drawer, takes out a soiled cloth and spreads it on the table. She then places things for tea on the table]

Nora. I imagine th' room looks very odd, somehow. . . . I was nearly forgetting Jack's tea. . . . Ah, I think I'll have everything done before he gets in. . . . [She tilts gently, as she arranges the table]

Th' violets were scenting th' woods, Nora,
Displaying their charms to th' bee,
When I first said I lov'd only you, Nora,
An' you said you lov'd only me.

Th' chestnut blooms gleam'd through th'
glade, Nora,
A robin sang loud from a tree,
When I first said I lov'd only you, Nora,
An' you said you lov'd only me.

[She pauses suddenly, and glances round the room]

[Doubtfully] I can't help feelin' this room very strange. . . . What is it? . . . What is it? . . . I must think. . . . I must thry to remember. . . .

Voices [chanting in a distant street]. Ambu . . . lance, Ambu . . . lance! Red Cro . . . ss, Red Cro . . . ss!

Nora [startled and listening for a moment, then resuming the arrangement of the table].

Trees, birds an' bees sang a song, Nora,
Of happier transports to be,
When I first said I lov'd only you, Nora,
An' you said you lov'd only me.

[A burst of rifle-fire is heard in a street near by, followed by the rapid tok-tok of a machine-gun]

[Staring in front of her and screaming] Jack, Jack, Jack! My baby, my baby, my baby!

Bessie [waking with a start]. You divil, are you afther gettin' out o' bed again!

[She rises and runs towards NORA, who rushes to the window, back L., which she frantically opens]

Nora [at the window, screaming]. Jack, Jack, for God's sake, come to me!

Soldiers [outside, shouting]. Git away, git away from that window, there!

Bessie [seizing hold of NORA]. Come

away, come away, woman, from that window!

Nora [*struggling with BESSIE*]. Where is it; where have you hidden it? Oh, Jack, Jack, where are you?

Bessie [*imploringly*]. Mrs. Clitheroe, for God's sake, come away!

Nora [*fiercely*]. I won't; he's below. Let . . . me . . . go! You're thyrin' to keep me from me husband. I'll follow him. Jack, Jack, come to your Nora!

Bessie. Hus-s-sh, Nora, Nora! He'll be here in a minute. I'll bring him to you, if you'll only be quiet—honest to God, I will.

[*With a great effort BESSIE pushes NORA away from the window, the force used causing her to stagger against it herself. Two rifle-shots ring out in quick succession. BESSIE jerks her body convulsively; stands stiffly upright for a moment, a look of agonized astonishment on her face, then she staggers forward, leaning heavily on the table with her hands*]

[*With an arrested scream of fear and pain*] Merciful God, I'm shot, I'm shot, I'm shot! . . . 'Th' life's pourin' out o' me! [*To NORA*] I've got this through . . . through you . . . through you, you bitch, you! . . . O God, have mercy on me! . . . [*To NORA*] You wouldn't stop quiet, no you wouldn't, you wouldn't, blast you! Look at what I'm afther gettin', look at what I'm afther gettin' . . . I'm bleedin' to death, an' no one's here to stop th' flowin' blood! [*Calling*] Mrs. Gogan, Mrs. Gogan! Fluther, Fluther, for God's sake, somebody, a doctor, a doctor!

[*BESSIE, leaving R. end of table, staggers down towards door R., but, weakening, she sinks down on her knees, R.C., then reclining, she supports herself by her right hand resting on floor. NORA is rigid with her back to wall, L., her trembling hands held out a little from her sides; her lips quivering, her breast heaving, staring wildly at the figure of BESSIE*]

Nora [*in a breathless whisper*]. Jack, I'm frightened. . . . I'm frightened, Jack. . . . Oh, Jack, where are you?

Bessie [*moaningly*]. This is what's afther comin' on me for nursin' you day an' night. . . . I was a fool, a fool, a fool! Get me a dhrink o' wather, you jade, will you? There's a fire burnin' in me blood! [*Pleadingly*] Nora, Nora, dear, for God's sake,

run out an' get Mrs. Gogan, or Fluther, or somebody to bring a doctor, quick, quick, quick! [*As NORA does not stir*] Blast you, stir yourself, before I'm gone!

Nora. Oh, Jack, Jack, where are you?

Bessie [*in a whispered moan*]. Jesus Christ, me sight's goin'! It's all dark, dark! Nora, hold me hand!

[*BESSIE's body lists over and she sinks into a prostrate position on the floor*] I'm dyin', I'm dyin' . . . I feel it. . . . Oh God, oh God! [*She feebly sings*] I do believe . . . I will believe That . . . Jesus . . . died . . . for . . . me, That . . . on . . . the . . . cross He . . . shed . . . His . . . blood From . . . sin . . . to . . . set . . . free.

[*She ceases singing, and lies stretched out, still and rigid. A pause; then MRS. GOGAN runs hastily in by door R. She halts at door and looks round with a frightened air*]

Mrs. Gogan [*quivering with fear*]. Blessed be God, what's afther happenin'! [*To NORA*] What's wrong, child, what's wrong? [*She sees BESSIE, runs to her and bends over the body*] Bessie, Bessie! [*She shakes the body*] Mrs. Burgess, Mrs. Burgess! [*She feels BESSIE's forehead*] My God, she's as cold as death. They're afther murderin' th' poor inoffensive woman!

[*SERGEANT TINLEY and CORPORAL STODDART, in agitation, enter by door R., their rifles at the ready*]

Sergeant Tinley [*excitedly*]. This is the 'ouse! [*They go rapidly to window, back, c.*] That's the window!

Nora [*pressing back against the wall*]. Hide it, hide it; cover it up, cover it up!

[*SERGEANT TINLEY, looking round room, sees body. He comes from window to BESSIE, and bends over her*]

Sergeant Tinley [*bending over body*]. 'Ere, wot's this? Oo's this? Oh, God, we've plugged one of the women of the 'ouse!

Corporal Stoddart [*at window*]. W'y the 'ell did she go to the window? Is she dead?

Sergeant Tinley. Dead as bedamned. Well, we couldn't afford to tike any chances.

[*SERGEANT TINLEY goes back to window, and looks out*]

Nora [*screaming, and putting her hands before her face*]. Hide it, hide it; don't let me see it! Take me away, take me away, Mrs. Gogan!

[MRS. GOGAN, *who has been weeping softly over BESSIE, rises, and crosses by front of table to room, L., goes in and comes out with a sheet in her hands. She crosses over and spreads the sheet over BESSIE's body*]

Mrs. Gogan [*as she spreads the sheet*]. Oh, God help her, th' poor woman, she's stiffenin' out as hard as she can! Her face has written on it th' shock o' sudden agony, an' her hands is whitenin' into th' smooth shininess of wax.

Nora [*whimperingly*]. Take me away, take me away; don't leave me here to be lookin' an' lookin' at it!

Mrs. Gogan [*going over to NORA and putting her arm round her*]. Come on with me, dear, an' you can doss in poor Mollser's bed, till we gather some neighbours to come an' give th' last friendly touches to Bessie in th' lonely layin' of her out.

[MRS. GOGAN *puts her arms round NORA, leads her across from L. to R., and they both go slowly out by door R.*]

[CORPORAL STODDART *comes from window to table, looks at tea-things on table; goes to fireplace, takes the teapot up in his hand*]

Corporal Stoddart [*over to TINLEY, at window*]. Tea here, Sergeant; wot abaht a cup of scald?

Sergeant Tinley. Pour it aht, pour it aht, Stoddart—I could scoff anything just now.

[CORPORAL STODDART *pours out two cups of tea. SERGEANT TINLEY comes from window to table, and sits on R. end; CORPORAL STODDART sits on opposite end*

of table, and they drink the tea. In the distance is heard a bitter burst of rifle and machine-gun fire, interspersed with the boom, boom of artillery. The glare in the sky seen through the window c., back, flares into a fuller and a deeper red]

Sergeant Tinley. There gows the general attack on the Powst Office.

Voices [*in a distant street*]. Ambu . . . lance, Ambu . . . lance! Red Cro . . . ss, Red Cro . . . ss!

[*The voices of soldiers at a barricade outside the house are heard singing*]

They were summoned from the 'illside,
They were called in from the glen,
And the country found 'em ready
At the stirring call for men.
Let not tears add to their 'ardship,
As the soldiers pass along,
And although our 'eart is breaking,
Make it sing this cheery song.

[SERGEANT TINLEY and CORPORAL STODDART *join in the chorus as they sip the tea*]

Sergeant Tinley and Corporal Stoddart [*singing*].

Keep the 'ome fires burning,
While your 'earts are yearning,
Though your lads are far away,
They dream of 'ome;
There's a silver lining
Through the dark cloud shining,
Turn the dark cloud inside out,
Till the boys come 'ome!

THE END

THE GREAT GOD BROWN

By EUGENE O'NEILL

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EUGENE O'NEILL AND HIS PLAYS

EUGENE O'NEILL was born in the city of New York in 1888, the son of James O'Neill, the actor. For the first seven years of his life he went with his parents when they were on tour; then he attended various schools; spent a year at Princeton University; prospected for gold in Spanish Honduras; shipped as a sailor for several voyages across the Atlantic; went on tour with his father and did a bit of acting; worked as a reporter on a newspaper; and had a year with Professor Baker in his "47 Workshop" at Harvard. He was one of the founders of the Provincetown Playhouse in New York, and had many of his early plays produced there. *Beyond the Horizon*, his first long play, won the Pulitzer prize in 1920. Twice since then he has won the prize, with *Anna Christie* and *Strange Interlude*, and has gained an international reputation. At present he is unquestionably and by common consent the most important dramatist that America has yet produced, and he is the only one who has attained what may be called world status. His plays have been produced in almost every theatre capital in Europe.

O'Neill's twenty-two long plays and sixteen plays in one act—a product that shows him to be an extremely prolific dramatist—are of various kinds. *Desire under the Elms*, for instance, and half a dozen others, are, judged by their surfaces, naturalistic; but all of them attempt to get below the surface to the springs of motive, and some of them, such as *Anna Christie*, are impregnated with symbolism. Others, again, such as *The Great God Brown*, *The Hairy Ape*, and *Dynamo* may be termed expressionistic; for their point of view is utterly antipodal to that of naturalism, and they employ technical devices either identical with or strongly akin to those of expressionism. *The Fountain* is a poetic romance. *Lazarus*, based on the biblical story, is an exposition of a philosophic idea and is of great beauty and power. *Marco Millions* is largely a bitter satire on the commercial view of life. Through all this wide variety of matter and form, with its considerable variety of style, the tone (except for that in *Marco Millions*) is almost altogether serious, and is often tragic. O'Neill seems but little interested in comedy, *Ah Wilderness!* in 1933 being his only wholly comic play.

Few dramatists have so freely and so fruitfully experimented in form. From the first, O'Neill sought a medium more expressive than the conventional. He is original in so far as he actually has worked out his own technique, but, as he himself states, he is deeply indebted to Strindberg, both for inspiration and for example, and he also owes something to the German expressionists. He soon mastered conventional technique, became dissatisfied with it, and began those daring experiments illustrated by *The Great God Brown* and *Strange Interlude*. In most cases, his daring has been justified by its results.

O'Neill's characters are usually uncertain personalities, under the sway of grim obsessions, at war with themselves, and seeking, perhaps unconsciously, freedom and the light. His style is generally simple and appropriate, is especially good in the use of various dialects, and is always effective when his characters express themselves naturally. When he grows rhapsodical and would-be poetic, he is unsure and often banal. Dramatically, he is strongest when he shows his characters in the grip of powerful emotions. He is weakest when he becomes self-conscious and labors to express an idea. Always, however, he is himself, uncompromising in the integrity of his art. He will be taken on his own terms or not at all.

The Great God Brown, in both matter and technique, is characteristic of O'Neill. It is a difficult play, with its values none too obvious, and for that reason is to many a person not only puzzling but irritating. But the search for its meanings is justified by their richness once they are discovered. It is a bitter satire on materialism, as embodied in William Brown; an analysis of a soul in whom the pagan and the Christian ascetic struggle for mastery, whose very name, compounded of Dionysus and St. Anthony, indicates the nature of the war within him; and a symbolic rendering of the truth that no human being is ever known as he really is except to Cybele, the earth mother, who begot him. The fine values of the play, perhaps somewhat clouded in the reading, appear strikingly on the stage, though even there some of the symbolism is none too clear.

The Great God Brown was first produced in New York, on January 23, 1926. It was produced in London on June 19, 1927.

CHARACTERS

WILLIAM A. BROWN

HIS FATHER, *a contractor*

HIS MOTHER

DION ANTHONY

HIS FATHER, *a builder*

HIS MOTHER

MARGARET

HER THREE SONS

CYBEL

TWO DRAFTSMEN }
A STENOGRAPHER } *in Brown's office*

*The action takes place in an American city
at the present day*

THE GREAT GOD BROWN

PROLOGUE

A cross section of the pier of the Casino. In the rear, built out beyond the edge, is a rectangular space with benches on the three sides. A rail encloses the entire wharf at the back.

It is a moonlight night in mid-June. From the Casino comes the sound of the school quartet rendering "Sweet Adeline" with many ultra-sentimental barber-shop quavers. There is a faint echo of the ensuing hand-clapping—then nothing but the lapping of ripples against the piles and their swishing on the beach—then footsteps on the boards, and BILLY BROWN walks along from the right with his MOTHER and FATHER. The MOTHER is a dumpy woman of forty-five, overdressed in black lace and spangles. The FATHER is fifty or more, the type of bustling, genial, successful, provincial business man, stout and hearty in his evening dress.

BILLY BROWN is a handsome, tall, and athletic boy of nearly eighteen. He is blond and blue-eyed, with a likable smile and a frank good-humored face, its expression already indicating a disciplined restraint. His manner has the easy self-assurance of a normal intelligence. He is in evening dress.

The three walk arm in arm, the MOTHER between.

Mother [always addressing the FATHER]. This Commencement dance is badly managed. Such singing! Such poor voices! Why doesn't Billy sing?

Billy [to her]. Mine is a regular fog horn! [He laughs]

Mother [to the air]. I had a pretty voice, when I was a girl. [To the FATHER, causitically] Did you see young Anthony strutting around the ballroom in dirty flannel pants?

Father. He's just showing off.

Mother. Such impudence! He's as ignorant as his father.

Father. The old man's all right. My only kick against him is he's been too damned conservative to let me branch out.

Mother [bitterly]. He has kept you down to his level—out of pure jealousy.

Father. But he took me into partnership, don't forget—

Mother [sharply]. Because you were the brains! Because he was afraid of losing you! [There is a pause]

Billy [admiringly]. Dion came in his old clothes on a bet with me. He's a real sport. He wouldn't have been afraid to appear in his pajamas. [He grins with appreciation]

Mother. Isn't the moonlight clear!

[She goes and sits on the center bench.

BILLY stands at the left corner, forward, his hand on the rail, like a prisoner at the bar, facing the judge. His FATHER stands in front of the bench on the right. The MOTHER announces, with finality . . .]

After he's through college, Billy must study for a profession of some sort—I'm determined on that! [She turns to her husband, defiantly, as if expecting opposition]

Father [eagerly and placatingly]. Just what I've been thinking, my dear. Architecture! How's that? Billy a first-rate, number-one architect! That's my proposition! What I've always wished I could have been myself! Only I never had the opportunity. But Billy—we'll make him a partner in the firm after. Anthony, Brown and Son, architects and builders—instead of contractors and builders!

Mother [yearning for the realization of a dream]. And we won't lay sidewalks—or dig sewers—ever again?

Father [a bit ruffled]. I and Anthony can build anything your pet can draw—even if it's a church! [Selling his idea] It's a great chance for him! He'll design—expand us—make the firm famous.

Mother [to the air—musingly]. When you proposed, I thought your future promised success—my future . . . [With a sigh] Well, I suppose we've been comfortable. Now, it's his future. How would Billy like to be an architect? [She does not look at him]

Billy [to her]. All right, Mother. [Sheepishly] I guess I've never bothered much about what I'd like to do after college—

but architecture sounds all right to me, I guess.

Mother [to the air—proudly]. Billy used to draw houses when he was little.

Father [jubilantly]. Billy's got the stuff in him to win, if he'll only work hard enough.

Billy [dutifully]. I'll work hard, Dad.

Mother. Billy can do anything!

Billy [embarrassed]. I'll try, Mother.

[*There is a pause*]

Mother [with a sudden shiver]. The nights are so much colder than they used to be! Think of it, I once went moonlight bathing in June when I was a girl—but the moonlight was so warm and beautiful in those days, do you remember, Father?

Father [putting his arm around her affectionately]. You bet I do, Mother.

[*He kisses her. The orchestra at the Casino strikes up a waltz*]

There's the music. Let's go back and watch the young folks dance.

[*They start off, leaving BILLY standing there*]

Mother [suddenly calling back over her shoulder]. I want to watch Billy dance.

Billy [dutifully]. Yes, Mother! [*He follows them*]

[*For a moment the faint sound of the music and the lapping of waves is heard. Then footsteps again, and the three ANTHONYS come in. First come the FATHER and MOTHER, who are not masked. The FATHER is a tall, lean man of fifty-five or sixty with a grim, defensive face, obstinate to the point of stupid weakness. The MOTHER is a thin, frail, faded woman, her manner perpetually nervous and distraught, but with a sweet and gentle face that had once been beautiful. The FATHER wears an ill-fitting black suit, like a mourner. The MOTHER wears a cheap, plain, black dress. Following them, as if he were a stranger, walking alone, is their son, DION. He is about the same height as young BROWN but lean and wiry, without repose, continually in restless nervous movement. His face is masked. The mask is a fixed forcing of his own face—dark, spiritual, poetic, passionately super-sensitive, helplessly unprotected in its childlike, religious faith in life—into the expression of a*

mocking, reckless, defiant, gayly scoffing, and sensual young Pan. He is dressed in a gray flannel shirt, open at the neck, sneakers over bare feet, and soiled white flannel trousers. The FATHER strides to the center bench and sits down. The MOTHER, who has been holding to his arm, lets go and stands by the bench at the right. They both stare at DION, who, with a studied carelessness, takes his place at the rail, where young BROWN had stood. They watch him, with queer, puzzled eyes]

Mother [suddenly—pleading]. You simply must send him to college!

Father. I won't. I don't believe in it. Colleges turn out lazy loafers to sponge on their poor old fathers! Let him slave like I had to! That'll teach him the value of a dollar! College'll only make him a bigger fool than he is already! I never got above grammar school, but I've made money and established a sound business. Let him make a man out of himself like I made of myself!

Dion [mockingly—to the air]. This Mr. Anthony is my father, but he only imagines he is God the Father.

[*They both stare at him*]

Father [with angry bewilderment]. What—what—what's that?

Mother [gently remonstrating to her son]. Dion, dear! [*To her husband—tauntingly*] Brown takes all the credit! He tells everyone the success is all due to his energy—that you're only an old stick-in-the-mud.

Father [stung, harshly]. The damn fool! He knows better'n anyone if I hadn't held him down to common sense, with his crazy wild-cat notions, he'd have had us ruined long ago!

Mother. He's sending Billy to college—Mrs. Brown just told me—going to have him study architecture afterwards, too, so's he can help expand your firm!

Father [angrily]. What's that? [*He suddenly turns on DION furiously*] Then you can make up your mind to go, too! And you'll learn to be a better architect than Brown's boy or I'll turn you out in the gutter without a penny! You hear?

Dion [mockingly—to the air]. It's difficult to choose—but architecture sounds less laborious.

Mother [fondly]. You ought to make a

wonderful architect, Dion. You've always painted pictures so well—

Dion [*with a start—resentfully*]. Why must she lie? Is it my fault? She knows I only try to paint. [*Passionately*] But I will, some day! [*Quickly, mocking again*] On to college! Well, it won't be home, anyway, will it?

[*He laughs queerly and approaches them. His FATHER gets up defensively. DION bows to him*]

I thank Mr. Anthony for this splendid opportunity to create myself—

[*He kisses his MOTHER, who bows with a strange humility as if she were a servant being saluted by the young master—then adds lightly . . .*]

in my mother's image, so she may feel her life comfortably concluded.

[*He sits in his FATHER's place and his mask stares with a frozen mockery before him. They stand on each side, looking dumbly at him*]

Mother [*at last, with a shiver*]. It's cold. June didn't use to be cold. I remember the June when I was carrying you, Dion—three months before you were born. [*She stares up at the sky*] The moonlight was warm, then. I could feel the night wrapped around me like a gray velvet gown lined with warm sky and trimmed with silver leaves!

Father [*gruffly—but with a certain awe*]. My mother used to believe the full of the moon was the time to sow. She was terrible old-fashioned. [*With a grunt*] I can feel it's bringing on my rheumatism. Let's go back indoors.

Dion [*with intense bitterness*]. Hide! Be ashamed!

[*They both start and stare at him*]

Father [*with bitter hopelessness, to his wife—indicating their son*]. Who is he? You bore him!

Mother [*proudly*]. He's my boy! He's Dion!

Dion [*bitterly resentful*]. What else, indeed! The identical son! [*Mockingly*] Are Mr. Anthony and his wife going in to dance? The nights grow cold! The days are dimmer than they used to be! Let's play hide-and-seek! Seek the monkey in the moon!

[*He suddenly cuts a grotesque caper, like a harlequin, and darts off, laughing with forced abandon. They stare after him—then slowly follow.*]

[*Again there is silence except for the sound of the lapping waves. Then MARGARET comes in, followed by the humbly worshipping BILLY BROWN. She is almost seventeen, pretty and vivacious, blonde, with big romantic eyes, her figure lithe and strong, her facial expression intelligent but youthfully dreamy, especially now in the moonlight. She is in a simple white dress. On her entrance, her face is masked with an exact, almost transparent reproduction of her own features, but giving her the abstract quality of a Girl instead of the individual, MARGARET*]

Margaret [*looking upward at the moon and singing in a low tone as they enter*]. "Ah, moon of my delight that knowest no wane!"

Billy [*eagerly*]. I've got that record—John McCormack. It's a peach! Sing some more.

[*She looks upward in silence. He keeps standing respectfully in back of her, glancing embarrassedly toward her averted face. He tries to make conversation*]

I think the *Rubáiyát's* great stuff, don't you? I never could memorize poetry worth a darn. Dion can recite lots of Shelley's poems by heart.

Margaret [*slowly taking off her mask—to the moon*]. Dion! [*There is a pause*]

Billy [*idgetting*]. Margaret!

Margaret [*to the moon*]. Dion is so wonderful!

Billy [*blunderingly*]. I asked you to come out here because I wanted to tell you something.

Margaret [*to the moon*]. Why did Dion look at me like that? It made me feel so crazy!

Billy. I wanted to ask you something, too.

Margaret. That one time he kissed me—I can't forget it! He was only joking—but I felt—and he saw and just laughed!

Billy. Because that's the uncertain part. My end of it is a sure thing, and has been for a long time, and I guess everybody in town knows it—they're always kidding me—so it's a cinch you must know—how I feel about you.

Margaret. Dion's so different from all the others. He can paint beautifully and write poetry, and he plays and sings and dances

so marvelously. But he's sad and shy, too, just like a baby sometimes, and he understands what I'm really like inside—and—and I'd love to run my fingers through his hair—and I love him! Yes, I love him! [*She stretches out her arms to the moon*] Oh, Dion, I love you!

Billy. I love you, Margaret.

Margaret. I wonder if Dion—I saw him looking at me again tonight . . . Oh, I wonder. . . !

Billy [*taking her hand and blurting out*]. Can't you love me? Won't you marry me—after college . . .

Margaret. Where is Dion now, I wonder?

Billy [*shaking her hand in an agony of uncertainty*]. Margaret! Please answer me!

[*MARGARET, her dream broken, puts on her mask, and turns to him*]

Margaret [*matter-of-factly*]. It's getting chilly. Let's go back and dance, Billy.

Billy [*desperately*]. I love you! [*He tries clumsily to kiss her*]

Margaret [*with an amused laugh*]. Like a brother! You can kiss me if you like. [*She kisses him*] A big-brother kiss. It doesn't count.

[*He steps back crushed, with head bowed. She turns away and takes off her mask—to the moon*]

I wish Dion would kiss me again!

Billy [*painfully*]. I'm a poor boob. I ought to know better. I'll bet I know. You're in love with Dion. I've seen you look at him. Isn't that it?

Margaret. Dion! I love the sound of it!

Billy [*huskily*]. Well—he's always been my best friend—I'm glad it's him—and I guess I know how to lose— [*He takes her hand and shakes it*] so here's wishing you all the success and happiness in the world, Margaret—and remember I'll always be your best friend! [*He gives her hand a final shake—swallows hard—then speaks manfully*] Let's go back in!

Margaret [*to the moon—faintly annoyed*]. What is Billy Brown doing here? I'll go down to the end of the dock and wait. Dion is the moon and I'm the sea. I want to feel the moon kissing the sea. I want Dion to leave the sky to me. I want the tides of my blood to leave my heart and follow him! [*She whispers like a little girl*] Dion! Margaret! Peggy! Peggy is Dion's girl—Peggy is Dion's little girl . . . [*She*

sings laughingly, elfishly] Dion is my Daddy-O!

[*She is walking toward the end of the dock. BILLY has turned away*]

Billy. I'm going. I'll tell Dion you're here.

[*MARGARET now speaks to herself more and more strongly and assertively, until at the end she is a wife and mother*]

Margaret. And I'll be Mrs. Dion—Dion's wife—and he'll be my Dion—my own Dion—my little boy—my baby! The moon is drowned in the tides of my heart, and peace sinks deep through the sea!

[*She disappears, her upturned unmasked face like that of a rapturous visionary. There is silence again, in which the dance music is heard. Then this stops, and DION comes in. He walks quickly to the bench and throws himself on it, hiding his masked face in his hands. After a moment, he lifts his head, peers about, listens huntedly, then slowly takes off his mask. His real face is revealed in the bright moonlight, shrinking, shy and gentle, full of deep sadness*]

Dion [*with a suffering bewilderment*]. Why am I afraid to dance, I who love music and rhythm and grace and song and laughter? Why am I afraid to live, I who love life and the beauty of flesh and the living colors of earth and sky and sea? Why am I afraid of love, I who love love? Why am I afraid, I who am not afraid? Why must I pretend to scorn in order to pity? Why must I hide myself in self-contempt in order to understand? Why must I be so ashamed of my strength, so proud of my weakness? Why must I live in a cage like a criminal, defying and hating, I who love peace and friendship? [*Clasping his hands above in supplication*] Why was I born without a skin, O God, that I must wear armor in order to touch, or to be touched?

[*A second's pause of waiting silence—then he suddenly claps his mask over his face again, with a gesture of despair, and his voice becomes bitter and sardonic*]

Or rather, Old Graybeard, why the devil was I ever born at all?

[*Steps are heard from the right. DION stiffens, and his mask stares straight ahead. BILLY comes in from the right.*

He is shuffling along disconsolately. When he sees DION, he stops abruptly and glowers resentfully—but at once the "good loser" in him conquers this!

Billy [embarrassedly]. Hello, Dion. I've been looking all over for you. [*He sits down on the bench at the right, forcing a joking tone*] What are you sitting here for, you nut—trying to get more moonstruck? [*After a pause—awkwardly*] I just left Margaret—

Dion [*giving a start—immediately defensively mocking*]. Bless you, my children!

Billy [*gruffly and slangily*]. I'm out of it—she gave me the gate. You're the original white-haired boy. Go on in and win! We've been chums ever since we were kids, haven't we?—and—I'm glad it's you, Dion. [*This huskily—he fumbles for DION's hand and gives it a shake*]

Dion [*letting his hand fall back—bitterly*]. Chums? Oh no, Billy Brown would despise me!

Billy. She's waiting for you now, down at the end of the dock.

Dion. For me? Which? Who? Oh, no, girls only allow themselves to look at what is seen!

Billy. She's in love with you.

[*DION is moved. There is a pause*]

Dion [*stammering*]. Miracle? I'm afraid. [*He chants flippantly*] I love, thou lovest, she loves! She loves, she loves—what?

Billy. And I know damn well, underneath your nuttiness, you're gone on her.

Dion [*moved*]. Underneath? I love love! I'd love to be loved! But I'm afraid! [*Aggressively*] Was afraid! Not now! Now I can make love—to anyone! Yes, I love Peggy! Why not? Who is she? Who am I? We love, you love, they love, one loves! No one loves! All the world loves a lover, God loves us all and we love Him! Love is a word—a shameless ragged ghost of a word—begging at all doors for life at any price!

Billy [*always as if he hadn't listened to what the other said*]. Say, let's you and me room together at college—

Dion. Billy wants to remain by her side!

Billy. It's a bet, then! [*Forcing a grin*] You can tell her I'll see that you behave! [*He turns away*] So long. Remember she's waiting. [*He goes*]

Dion [*dazedly, to himself*]. Waiting—waiting for me! [*He slowly removes his*

mask. His face is torn and transfigured by joy. He stares at the sky raptly] O God in the moon, did you hear? She loves me! I am not afraid! I am strong! I can love! She protects me! Her arms are softly around me! She is warmly around me! She is my skin! She is my armor! Now I am born—I—the I!—one and indivisible—I who love Margaret! [*He glances at his mask triumphantly—in tones of deliverance*] You are outgrown! I am beyond you! [*He stretches out his arms to the sky*] O God, now I believe!

[*From the end of the wharf, MARGARET's voice is heard*]

Margaret. Dion!

Dion [*raptly*]. Margaret!

Margaret [*nearer*]. Dion!

Dion. Margaret!

Margaret. Dion!

[*She comes running in, her mask in her hands. He springs toward her with outstretched arms, but she shrinks away with a frightened shriek and hastily puts on her mask. DION starts back. She speaks coldly and angrily*]

Who are you? Why are you calling me? I don't know you!

Dion [*heart-brokenly*]. I love you!

Margaret [*freezingly*]. Is this a joke—or are you drunk?

Dion [*with a final pleading whisper*]. Margaret!

[*But she only glares at him contemptuously. Then with a sudden gesture he claps his mask on and laughs wildly and bitterly*]

Ha-ha-ha! That's one on you, Peg!

Margaret [*with delight, pulling off her mask*]. Dion! How did you ever—why, I never knew you!

Dion [*putting his arm around her boldly*]. How? It's the moon—the crazy moon—the monkey in the moon—playing jokes on us! [*He kisses her with his masked face with a romantic actor's passion again and again*] You love me! You know you do! Say it! Tell me! I want to hear! I want to feel! I want to know! I want to want! To want you as you want me!

Margaret [*in ecstasy*]. Oh, Dion, I do! I do love you!

Dion [*with ironic mastery—rhetorically*]. And I love you! Oh, madly! Oh, forever and ever, amen! You are my evening star

and all my Pleiades! Your eyes are blue pools in which gold dreams glide, your body is a young white birch leaning backward beneath the lips of spring. So! [*He has bent her back, his arms supporting her, his face above hers*] So! [*He kisses her*]

Margaret [*with overpowering passionate languor*]. Oh, Dion! Dion! I love you!

Dion [*with more and more mastery in his tone*]. I love, you love, we love! Come! Rest! Relax! Let go your clutch on the world! Dim and dimmer! Fading out in the past behind! Gone! Death! Now! Be born! Awake! Live! Dissolve into dew—into silence—into night—into earth—into space—into peace—into meaning—into joy—into God—into the Great God Pan!

[*While he has been speaking, the moon has passed gradually behind a black cloud, its light fading out. There is a moment of intense blackness and silence. Then the light gradually comes on again. Dion's voice, at first in a whisper, then increasing in volume with the light, is heard*]

Wake up! Time to get up! Time to exist! Time for school! Time to learn! Learn to pretend! Cover your nakedness! Learn to lie! Learn to keep step! Join the procession! Great Pan is dead! Be ashamed!

Margaret [*with a sob*]. Oh, Dion, I am ashamed!

Dion [*mockingly*]. Sssshh! Watch the monkey in the moon! See him dance! His tail is a piece of string that was left when he broke loose from Jehovah and ran away to join Charley Darwin's circus!

Margaret. I know you must hate me now! [*She throws her arms around him and hides her head on his shoulder*]

Dion [*deeply moved*]. Don't cry! Don't —! [*He suddenly tears off his mask—in a passionate agony*] Hate you? I love you with all my soul! Love me! Why can't you love me, Margaret?

[*He tries to kiss her, but she jumps to her feet with a frightened cry, holding up her mask before her face protectingly*]

Margaret. Don't! Please! I don't know you! You frighten me!

Dion [*putting on his mask again—quietly and bitterly*]. All's well. I'll never let you see again [*He puts his arm around her—gently mocking*] By proxy, I love you. There! Don't cry! Don't be afraid! Dion

Anthony will marry you some day. [*He kisses her*] "I take this woman . . ." [*Tenderly joking*] Hello, woman! Do you feel older by æons? Mrs. Dion Anthony, shall we go in, and may I have the next dance?

Margaret [*tenderly*]. You crazy child! [*Then, laughing with joy*] Mrs. Dion Anthony! It sounds wonderful, doesn't it?

[*They go out*]

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

Seven years later.

The sitting room of MRS. DION ANTHONY'S half of a two-family house in the homes section of the town—one of those one-design districts that daze the eye with multiplied ugliness. The four pieces of furniture shown are in keeping—an armchair at left, a table with a chair in back of it at center, a sofa at right. The same courtroom effect of the arrangement of benches in Act One is held to here. The background is a backdrop on which the rear wall is painted with the intolerable lifeless realistic detail of the stereotyped paintings which usually adorn the sitting rooms of such houses. It is late afternoon of a gray day in winter.

DION is sitting behind the table, staring before him. The mask hangs on his breast below his neck, giving the effect of two faces. His real face has aged greatly, grown more strained and tortured, but at the same time, in some queer way, more selfless and ascetic, more fixed in its resolute withdrawal from life. The mask, too, has changed. It is older, more defiant and mocking, its sneer more forced and bitter, its Pan quality becoming Mephistophelean. It has already begun to show the ravages of dissipation.

DION suddenly reaches out and takes up a copy of the New Testament which is on the table and, putting a finger in at random, opens and reads aloud the text at which it points.

Dion. "Come unto me all ye who are heavy laden and I will give you rest." [*He stares before him in a sort of trance, his face lighted up from within but painfully confused—in an uncertain whisper*] I will come—but where are you, Savior?

[The noise of the outer door shutting is heard. DION starts and claps the mocking mask on his face again. He tosses the Testament aside contemptuously]

Blah! Fixation on old Mama Christianity! You infant blubbering in the dark, you!

[He laughs, with a bitter self-contempt. Footsteps approach. He picks up a newspaper and hides behind it hurriedly. MARGARET enters. She is dressed in stylish, expensive clothes and a fur coat, which look as if they had been remodeled and seen service. She has grown mature and maternal, in spite of her youth. Her pretty face is still fresh and healthy, but there is the beginning of a permanently worried, apprehensive expression about the nose and mouth—an uncomprehending hurt in her eyes. DION pretends to be engrossed in his paper. She bends down and kisses him]

Margaret [with a forced gayety]. Good morning—at four in the afternoon! You were snoring when I left!

Dion [putting his arms around her with a negligent, accustomed gesture—mockingly]. The Ideal Husband!

[MARGARET, already preoccupied with another thought, comes and sits in the chair on the left]

Margaret. I was afraid the children would disturb you, so I took them over to Mrs. Young's to play.

[There is a pause. DION picks up the paper again. MARGARET asks anxiously . . .]

I suppose they'll be all right over there, don't you?

[He doesn't answer. She is more hurt than offended]

I wish you'd try to take more interest in the children, Dion.

Dion [mockingly]. Become a father—before breakfast? I'm in too delicate a condition.

[She turns away, hurt. Penitently he pats her hand—vaguely]

All right. I'll try.

Margaret [squeezing his hand—with possessive tenderness]. Play with them. You're a bigger kid than they are—underneath.

Dion [self-mockingly—flipping the Bible]. Underneath—I'm becoming downright infantile! "Suffer these little ones!"

Margaret [keeping to her certainty]. You're my oldest.

Dion [with mocking appreciation]. She puts the Kingdom of Heaven in its place!

Margaret [withdrawing her hand]. I was serious.

Dion. So was I—about something or other. [He laughs] This domestic diplomacy! We communicate in code—when neither has the other's key!

[MARGARET frowns confusedly, then forces a playful tone]

Margaret. I want to have a serious talk with you, young man. In spite of your promises, you've kept up the hard drinking and gambling you started the last year abroad.

Dion. From the time I realized it wasn't in me to be an artist—except in living—and not even in that! [He laughs bitterly]

Margaret [with conviction]. But you can paint, Dion—beautifully!

Dion [with deep pain]. No! [He suddenly takes her hand and kisses it gratefully] I love Margaret! Her blindness surpasseth all understanding! [Bitterly] Or is it pity?

Margaret. We've only got about one hundred dollars left in the bank.

Dion [with dazed surprise]. What! Is all the money from the sale of the house gone?

Margaret [wearily]. Every day or so you've been cashing checks. You've been drinking—you haven't counted—

Dion [irritably]. I know! [After a pause—soberly] No more estate to fall back on, eh? Well, for five years it kept us living abroad in peace. It bought us a little happiness—of a kind—didn't it?—living and loving and having children—[After a slight pause—bitterly]—thinking one was creating before one discovered one couldn't!

Margaret [this time with forced conviction]. But you can paint—beautifully!

Dion [angrily]. Shut up! [After a pause—jeeringly] So my wife thinks it behooves me to settle down and support my family in the meager style to which they'll have to become accustomed?

Margaret [shamefacedly]. I didn't say—still—something's got to be done.

Dion [harshly]. Will Mrs. Anthony helpfully suggest what?

Margaret. I met Billy Brown on the street. He said you'd have made a good architect, if you'd stuck to it.

Dion. Flatterer! Instead of leaving college when my Old Man died? Instead of marrying Peggy and going abroad and being happy?

Margaret [*as if she hadn't heard*]. He spoke of how well you used to draw.

Dion. Billy was in love with Margaret at one time.

Margaret. He wanted to know why you've never been in to see him.

Dion. He's bound heaven-bent for success. It's the will of Mammon! Anthony and Brown, contractors and builders—death subtracts Anthony, and I sell out—Billy graduates—Brown and Son, architects and builders—old man Brown perishes of paternal pride—and now we have William A. Brown, architect! Why his career itself already has an architectural design! One of God's mud pies!

Margaret. He particularly told me to ask you to drop in.

Dion [*springing to his feet—assertively*]. No! Pride! I have been alive!

Margaret. Why don't you have a talk with him?

Dion. Pride in my failure!

Margaret. You were always such close friends.

Dion [*more and more desperately*]. The pride which came after man's fall—by which he laughs as a creator at his self-defeats!

Margaret. Not for my sake—but for your own—and, above all, for the children's!

Dion [*with terrible despair*]. Pride! Pride without which the Gods are worms!

Margaret [*after a pause, meekly and humbly*]. You don't want to? It would hurt you? All right, dear. Never mind. We'll manage somehow—you mustn't worry—you must start your beautiful painting again—and I can get that position in the library—it would be such fun for me working there! . . . [*She reaches out and takes his hand—tenderly*] I love you, dear. I understand.

[DION slumps down into his chair, crushed, his face averted from hers, as hers is from him, although their hands are still clasped. He speaks in a trembling, expiring voice]

Dion. Pride is dying! [*As if he were suffocating, he pulls the mask from his resigned, pale, suffering face. He prays like a Saint in the desert, exorcizing a demon*] Pride

is dead! Blessed are the meek! Blessed are the poor in spirit!

Margaret [*without looking at him—in a comforting, motherly tone*]. My poor boy!

Dion [*resentfully—clapping on his mask again and springing to his feet—derisively*]. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit graves! Blessed are the poor in spirit, for they are blind! [*With tortured bitterness*] All right! Then I ask my wife to go and ask Billy Brown—that's more deadly than if I went myself! [*With wild mockery*] Ask him if he can't find an opening for a talented young man who is only honest when he isn't sober—implore him, beg him in the name of old love, old friendship—to be a generous hero and save the woman and her children! [*He laughs with a sort of diabolical, ironical glee now, and starts to go out*]

Margaret [*meekly*]. Are you going up street, Dion?

Dion. Yes.

Margaret. Will you stop at the butchers' and have them send two pounds of pork chops?

Dion. Yes.

Margaret. And stop at Mrs. Young's and ask the children to hurry right home?

Dion. Yes.

Margaret. Will you be back for dinner, Dion?

Dion. No.

[*He goes; the outer door slams. MARGARET sighs with a tired incomprehension and goes to the window and stares out*]

Margaret [*worriedly*]. I hope they'll watch out, crossing the street.

SCENE TWO

BILLY BROWN's Office, at five in the afternoon. At the center is a fine mahogany desk with a swivel chair in back of it. To the left of the desk is an office armchair. To the right of the desk is an office lounge. The background is a backdrop of an office wall, treated similarly to that of Scene One in its over-meticulous representation of detail.

BILLY BROWN is seated at the desk, looking over a blue print by the light of a desk lamp. He has grown into a fine-looking, well-dressed, capable, college-bred American

business man, boyish still and with the same engaging personality.

The telephone rings.

Brown [answering the telephone]. Yes? Who? [This in surprise—then with eager pleasure] Let her come right in.

[He gets up and goes to the door, expectant and curious. MARGARET enters. Her face is concealed behind the mask of the pretty young matron, still hardly a woman, who cultivates a naïvely innocent and bravely hopeful attitude toward things and acknowledges no wound to the world. She is dressed as in Scene One but with an added touch of effective primping here and there]

Margaret [very gayly]. Hello, Billy Brown!

Brown [awkward in her presence, shaking her hand]. Come in. Sit down. This is a pleasant surprise, Margaret.

[She sits down on the lounge. He sits in his chair behind the desk, as before]

Margaret [looking around]. What lovely offices! My, but Billy Brown is getting grand!

Brown [pleased]. I've just moved in. The old place was too stuffy.

Margaret. It looks so prosperous—but then, Billy is doing so wonderfully well, everyone says.

Brown [modestly]. Well, to be frank, it's been mostly luck. Things have come my way without my doing much about it. [With an abashed pride] Still—I have done a little something myself. [He picks the plan from the desk] See this? It's my design for the new Municipal Building. It's just been accepted—provisionally—by the Committee.

Margaret [taking the plan, speaking vaguely]. Oh?

[She looks at the plan abstractedly.

There is a pause. She speaks suddenly] You mentioned the other day how well Dion used to draw . . .

Brown [a bit stiffly]. Yes, he certainly did. [He takes the drawing from her and at once becomes interested and squints at it frowningly] Did you notice that anything seemed lacking in this?

Margaret [indifferently]. Not at all.

Brown [with a cheerful grin]. The Committee want it made a little more American. It's too much of a conventional Greco-

Roman tomb, they say. [He laughs] They want an original touch of modern novelty stuck in to liven it up and make it look different from other town halls. [Putting the drawing back on his desk] And I've been figuring out how to give it to them, but my mind doesn't seem to run that way. Have you any suggestion?

Margaret [as if she hadn't heard]. Dion certainly draws well, Billy Brown was saying?

Brown [trying not to show his annoyance]. Why, yes—he did—and still can, I expect.

[There is a pause. He masters what he feels to be an unworthy pique and turns to her generously]

Dion would have made a cracking good architect.

Margaret [proudly]. I know. He could be anything he wanted to.

Brown [after a pause—embarrassedly]. Is he working at anything these days?

Margaret [defensively]. Oh, yes! He's painting wonderfully! But he's just like a child, he's so impractical. He doesn't try to have an exhibition anywhere, or anything.

Brown [surprised]. The one time I ran into him, I thought he told me he'd destroyed all his pictures—that he'd gotten sick of painting and completely given it up.

Margaret [quickly]. He always tells people that. He doesn't want anyone even to look at his things, imagine! He keeps saying they're rotten—when they're really too beautiful! He's too modest for his own good, don't you think? But it is true he hasn't done so much lately since we've been back. You see, the children take up such a lot of his time. He just worships them! I'm afraid he's becoming a hopeless family man, just the opposite of what anyone would expect who knew him in the old days.

Brown [painfully embarrassed by her loyalty and his knowledge of the facts]. Yes, I know. [He coughs self-consciously]

Margaret [aroused by something in his manner]. But I suppose the gossips are telling the same silly stories about him they always did [She forces a laugh] Poor Dion! Give a dog a bad name! [Her voice breaks a little in spite of herself]

Brown [hastily]. I haven't heard any stories—[He stops uncertainly, then decides to plunge in] except about money matters.

Margaret [*forcing a laugh*]. Oh, perhaps they're true enough. Dion is such a generous fool with his money, like all artists.

Brown [*with a certain doggedness*]. There's a rumor that you've applied for a position at the Library.

Margaret [*forcing a gay tone*]. Yes, indeed! Won't it be fun! Maybe it'll improve my mind! And one of us has got to be practical, so why not me? [*She forces a gay, girlish laugh*]

Brown [*impulsively reaching out and taking her hand—awkwardly*]. Listen, Margaret. Let's be perfectly frank, will you? I'm such an old friend, and I want like the deuce to. . . . You know darn well I'd do anything in the world to help you—or Dion.

Margaret [*withdrawing her hand, coldly*]. I'm afraid I—don't understand, Billy Brown.

Brown [*acutely embarrassed*]. Well, I—I just meant—you know, if you needed. . .

[*There is a pause. He looks questioningly at her averted face, then ventures on another tack, speaking matter-of-factly*]

I've got a proposition to make to Dion—if I could ever get hold of him. It's this way: business has been piling up on me—a run of luck—but I'm short-handed. I need a crack chief draftsman darn badly—or I'm liable to lose out. Do you think Dion would consider it—as a temporary stop-gap—until he felt in the painting mood again?

Margaret [*striving to conceal her eagerness and relief—judicially*]. Yes—I really do. He's such a good sport, and Billy and he were such pals once. I know he'd be only too tickled to help him out.

Brown [*diffidently*]. I thought he might be sensitive about working for—I mean, with me—when, if he hadn't sold out to Dad he'd be my partner now—[*earnestly*] and, by jingo, I wish he was! [*Abruptly*] Let's try to nail him down right away, Margaret. Is he home now? [*He reaches for the phone*]

Margaret [*hurriedly*]. No, he—he went out for a long walk.

Brown. Perhaps I can locate him later around town somewhere.

Margaret [*with a note of pleading*]. Please don't trouble. It isn't necessary. I'm sure when I talk to him—he's coming home to dinner. . . . [*Getting up*] Then it's all settled, isn't it? Dion will be so glad to

be able to help an old friend—he's so terribly loyal, and he's always liked Billy Brown so much! [*Holding out her hand*] I really must go now!

Brown [*shaking her hand*]. Good-by, Margaret. I hope you'll be dropping in on us a lot when Dion gets here.

Margaret. Yes. [*She goes*]

[*Brown sits at his desk again, looking ahead in a not unsatisfying melancholy reverie*]

Brown [*muttering admiringly but pityingly*]. Poor Margaret! She's such a game sport, but it's pretty damn tough on her! [*Indignantly*] By God, I'm going to give Dion a good talking-to one of these days!

SCENE THREE

Cybel's parlor. An automatic, nickel-in-the slot player-piano is at the center, rear. On its right is a dirty gilt second-hand sofa. At the left is a bald-spotted crimson plush chair. The backdrop for the rear wall is cheap wall-paper of a dull yellow-brown, resembling a blurred impression of a fallow field in early spring. There is a cheap alarm clock on top of the piano. Beside it Cybel's mask is lying.

DION is sprawled on his back, fast asleep on the sofa. His mask has fallen down on his chest. His pale face is singularly pure, spiritual, and sad.

The player-piano is groggily banging out a sentimental medley of "Mother—Mammy" tunes.

CYBEL is seated on the stool in front of the piano. She is a strong, calm, sensual, blonde girl of twenty or so, her complexion fresh and healthy, her figure full-breasted and wide-hipped, her movements slow and solidly languorous like an animal's, her large eyes dreamy with the reflected stirring of profound instincts. She chews gum like a sacred cow forgetting time with an eternal end. Her eyes are fixed, incuriously, on DION's pale face. CYBEL, as the tune runs out, glances at the clock, which indicates midnight, then goes slowly over to DION and puts her hand gently on his forehead.

Cybel. Wake up! [*DION stirs, sighs*]

Dion [*murmuring dreamily*]. "And He laid his hands on them and healed them." [*With a start he opens his eyes and, half sitting up, stares at her bewilderedly*] What

—where—who are you? [*He reaches for his mask and claps it on defensively*]

Cybel [*placidly*]. Only another female. You was camping on my steps, sound asleep. I didn't want to run any risk getting into more trouble with the cops pinching you there and blaming me, so I took you in to sleep it off.

Dion [*mockingly*]. Blessed are the pitiful, Sister! I'm broke—but you will be rewarded in Heaven!

Cybel [*calmly*]. I wasn't wasting my pity. Why should I? You were happy, weren't you?

Dion [*approvingly*]. Excellent! You're not a moralist, I see.

Cybel [*going on*]. And you look like a good boy, too—when you're asleep. Say, you better beat it home to bed or you'll be locked out.

Dion [*mockingly*]. Now you're becoming maternal, Miss Earth. Is that the only answer—to pin my soul into every vacant diaper?

[*She stares down at his mask, her face growing hard. He laughs*]

But please don't stop stroking my aching brow. Your hand is a cool mud poultice on the sting of thought!

Cybel [*calmly*]. Stop acting. I hate ham fats. [*She looks at him as if waiting for him to remove his mask—then turns her back indifferently and goes to the piano*] Well, if you simply got to be a regular devil like all the other visiting sports, I s'pose I got to play with you.

[*She takes her mask and puts it on—then turns. The mask is the rouged and eye-blackened countenance of the hardened prostitute. She now speaks in a coarse, harsh voice*]

Kindly state your dishonorable intentions, if any! I can't sit up all night keeping company! Let's have some music!

[*She puts a plug in the machine. The same sentimental medley begins to play. The two masks stare at each other. She laughs*]

Shoot! I'm all set! It's your play, Kid Lucifer!

[*DION slowly removes his mask. CYBEL stops the music with a jerk. DION's face is gentle and sad*]

Dion [*humbly*]. I'm sorry. It has always been such agony with me to be touched!

[*CYBEL takes off her mask and comes back and sits down on the stool*]

Cybel [*sympathetically*]. Poor kid! I've never had one, but I can guess. They hug and kiss you and take you on their laps and pinch you and want to see you getting dressed and undressed—as if they owned you . . . I bet you I'd never let them treat one of mine that way!

Dion [*turning to her*]. You're lost in blind alleys, too. [*Suddenly holding out his hand to her*] But you're strong. Let's be friends.

Cybel [*with a strange sternness, searching his face*]. And never nothing more?

Dion [*with a strange smile*]. Let's say, never anything less!

[*She takes his hand. There is a ring at the outside door bell. CYBEL and DION stare at each other. There is another ring. CYBEL puts on her mask. DION does likewise*]

Cybel [*mockingly*]. When you got to love to live, it's hard to love living. I better join the A. F. of L. and soap-box for the eight-hour night! Got a nickel, baby? Play a tune.

[*She goes out. DION puts a nickel in. The same sentimental tune starts. CYBEL returns, followed by BILLY BROWN. His face is rigidly composed, but his superior disgust for DION can be seen. DION jerks off the music, and he and BILLY look at each other for a moment, CYBEL watching them both—then, bored, she yawns*]

He's hunting for you. Put out the lights when you go. I'm going to sleep. [*She starts to go—then, as if reminded of something turns to DION*] Life's all right, if you let it alone. [*Mechanically flashing a trade smile at BILLY*] Now you know the way, Handsome, call again! [*She goes*]

Brown [*after an awkward pause*]. Hello, Dion! I've been looking all over town for you. This place was the very last chance. . . . [*After another pause—embarrassedly*] Let's take a walk.

Dion [*mockingly*]. I've given up exercise. They claim it lengthens your life.

Brown [*persuasively*]. Come on, Dion, be a good fellow. You're certainly not staying here—

Dion. Billy would like to think me taken in *flagrante delicto*, eh?

Brown. Don't be a damn fool! Listen to

me! I've been looking you up for purely selfish reasons. I need your help.

Dion [astonished]. What?

Brown. I've a proposition to make that I hope you'll consider favorably out of old friendship. To be frank, Dion, I need you to lend me a hand down at the office.

Dion [with a harsh laugh]. So it's a job, is it? Then my poor wife did a-begging go!

Brown [repelled—sharply]. On the contrary, I had to beg her to beg you to take it! *[More angrily]* Look here, Dion! I won't listen to you talk that way about Margaret! And you wouldn't if you weren't drunk! *[Suddenly shaking him]* What in hell has come over you, anyway! You didn't use to be like this! What the devil are you going to do with yourself—sink into the gutter and drag Margaret with you? If you'd heard her defend you, lie about you, tell me how hard you were working, what beautiful things you were painting, how you stayed at home and idolized the children!—when everyone knows you've been out every night sousing and gambling away the last of your estate. . . . *[He stops, ashamed, controlling himself]*

Dion [wearily]. She was lying about her husband, not me, you fool! But it's no use explaining. *[In a sudden, excitable passion]* What do you want? I agree to anything—except the humiliation of yelling secrets at the deaf!

Brown [trying a bullying tone—roughly]. Bunk! Don't try to crawl out! There's no excuse, and you know it. *[As Dion doesn't reply—penitently]* But I know I shouldn't talk this way, old man! It's only because we're such old pals—and I hate to see you wasting yourself—you who had more brains than any of us! But, damn it, I suppose you're too much of a rotten cynic to believe I mean what I've just said!

Dion [touched]. I know Billy was always Dion Anthony's friend.

Brown. You're damn right I am—and I'd have proved it long ago if you'd only given me half a chance! After all, I couldn't keep chasing after you and be snubbed every time. A man has some pride!

Dion [bitterly mocking]. Dead wrong! Never more! None whatever! It's unmoral! Blessed are the poor in spirit, Brother! When shall I report?

Brown [eagerly]. Then you'll take the—you'll help me?

Dion [wearily bitter]. I'll take the job. One must do something to pass away the time, while one is waiting—for one's next incarnation.

Brown [jokingly]. I'd say it was a bit early to be worrying about that. *[Trying to get Dion started]* Come along, now. It's pretty late.

Dion [shaking Brown's hand off his shoulder and walking away from him—after a pause]. Is my father's chair still there?

Brown [turning away—embarrassed]. I—I don't really remember, Dion—I'll look it up.

Dion [taking off his mask—slowly]. I'd like to sit where he spun what I have spent. What aliens we were to each other! When he lay dead, his face looked so familiar that I wondered where I had met that man before. Only at the second of my conception. After that, we grew hostile with concealed shame. And my mother? I remember a sweet, strange girl, with affectionate, bewildered eyes as if God had locked her in a dark closet without any explanation. I was the sole doll our ogre, her husband, allowed her, and she played mother and child with me for many years in that house until at last through two tears I watched her die with the shy pride of one who has lengthened her dress and put up her hair. And I felt like a forsaken toy and cried to be buried with her, because her hands alone had caressed without clawing. She lived long and aged greatly in the two days before they closed her coffin. The last time I looked, her purity had forgotten me, she was stainless and imperishable, and I knew my sobs were ugly and meaningless to her virginity; so I shrank away, back into life, with naked nerves jumping like fleas, and in due course of nature another girl called me her boy in the moon and married me and became three mothers in one person, while I got paint on my paws in an endeavor to see God! *[He laughs wildly—claps on his mask]* But that Ancient Humorist had given me weak eyes, so now I'll have to foreswear my quest for Him and go in for the Omnipresent Successful Serious One, the Great God Mr. Brown, instead! *[He makes him a sweeping, mocking bow]*

Brown [repelled but cajolingly]. Shut up, you nut! You're still drunk. Come on! Let's

start! [*He grabs DION by the arm and switches off the light*]

Dion [*from the darkness—mockingly*]. I am thy shorn, bald, nude sheep! Lead on, Almighty Brown, thou Kindly Light!

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

CYBEL'S parlor—about sunset in spring seven years later. The arrangement of furniture is the same, but the chair and sofa are new, bright-colored, costly pieces. The old automatic piano looks exactly the same. The cheap alarm clock is still on top of it. On either side of the clock, the masks of DION and CYBEL are lying. The background backdrop is brilliant, stunning wall-paper, on which crimson and purple flowers and fruits tumble over one another in a riotously profane lack of any apparent design.

DION sits in the chair on the left, CYBEL on the sofa. A card-table is between them. Both are playing solitaire. DION is now prematurely gray. His face is that of an ascetic, a martyr, furrowed by pain and self-torture, yet lighted from within by a spiritual calm and human kindliness.

CYBEL has grown stouter and more voluptuous, but her face is still unmarked and fresh, her calm more profound. She is like an unmoved idol of Mother Earth.

The piano is whining out its same old sentimental medley. They play their cards intently and contentedly. The music stops.

Cybel [*musingly*]. I love those rotten old sob tunes. They make me wise to people. That's what's inside them—what makes them love and murder their neighbor—crying jags set to music!

Dion [*compassionately*]. Every song is a hymn. They keep trying to find the Word in the Beginning.

Cybel. They try to know too much. It makes them weak. I never puzzled them with myself. I gave them a Tart. They understood her and knew their parts and acted naturally. And on both sides we were able to keep our real virtue, if you get me. [*She plays her last card—indifferently*] I've made it again.

Dion [*smiling*]. Your luck is uncanny. It never comes out for me.

Cybel. You keep getting closer, but it knows you still want to win—a little bit—and it's wise all I care about is playing. [*She lays out another game*] Speaking of my canned music, our Mr. Brown hates that old box.

[*At the mention of BROWN, DION trembles as if suddenly possessed, has a terrible struggle with himself, then while she continues to speak; gets up like an automaton and puts on his mask. The mask is now terribly ravaged. All of its Pan quality has changed into a diabolical Mephistophelean cruelty and irony*]

He doesn't mind the music inside. That gets him somehow. But he thinks the case looks shabby, and he wants it junked. But I told him that just because he's been keeping me so long, he needn't start bossing like a husband or I'll— [*She looks up and sees the masked DION standing by the piano—calmly*] hello! Getting jealous again?

Dion [*jeeringly*]. Are you falling in love with your keeper, old Sacred Cow?

Cybel [*without taking offense*]. Cut it! You've been asking me that for years. Be yourself! He's healthy and handsome—but he's too guilty. What makes you pretend you think love is so important, anyway? It's just one of a lot of things you do to keep life living.

Dion [*in the same tone*]. Then you've lied when you've said you loved me, have you, Old Filth?

Cybel [*affectionately*]. You'll never grow up! We've been friends, haven't we, for seven years? I've never let myself want you nor you me. Yes, I love you. It takes all kinds of love to make a world! Ours is the living cream, I say, living rich and high! [*After a pause—coaxingly*] Stop hiding. I know you.

[*Dion, taking off his mask, wearily comes and sits down at her feet and lays his head in her lap—with a grateful smile*]

Dion. You're strong. You always give. You've given my weakness strength to live.

Cybel [*tenderly, stroking his hair maternally*]. You're not weak. You were born with ghosts in your eyes, and you were brave enough to go looking into your own dark—and you got afraid. [*After a pause*] I don't blame your being jealous of Mr.

Brown sometimes. I'm jealous of your wife, even though I know you do love her.

Dion [slowly]. I love Margaret. I don't know who my wife is.

Cybel [after a pause—with a queer broken laugh]. Oh, God, sometimes the truth hits me such a sock between the eyes I can see the stars!—and then I'm so damn sorry for the lot of you, every damn mother's son-of-a-gun of you, that I'd like to run out naked into the street and love the whole mob to death like I was bringing you all a new brand of dope that'd make you forget everything that ever was for good! [With a twisted smile] But they wouldn't see me, any more than they see each other. And they keep right on moving along and dying without my help, anyway.

Dion [sadly]. You've given me strength to die.

Cybel. You may be important, but your life's not. There's millions of it born every second. Life can cost too much even for a sucker to afford it—like everything else. And it's not sacred—only the you inside is. The rest is earth.

[*Dion gets to his knees and with clasped hands looks up rapidly and prays with an ascetic fervor*]

Dion. "Into thy hands, O Lord," . . . [Suddenly, with a look of horror] Nothing! To feel one's life blown out like the flame of a cheap match . . . ! [*He claps on his mask and laughs harshly*] To fall asleep and know you'll never, never be called to get on the job of existence again! "Swift be thine approaching flight! Come soon—soon!" [*He quotes this last with a mocking longing*]

Cybel [patting his head maternally]. There, don't be scared. It's born in the blood. When the time comes, you'll find it's easy.

Dion [jumping to his feet and walking about excitedly]. It won't be long. My wife dragged in a doctor the day before yesterday. He says my heart is gone—booze . . . He warned me, never another drop or . . . [Mockingly] What say? Shall we have a drink?

Cybel [like an idol]. Suit yourself. It's in the pantry. [As he hesitates] What set you off on this bat? You were raving on about some cathedral plans. . . .

Dion [wildly mocking]. They've been accepted—Mr. Brown's designs! My designs

really! You don't need to be told that. He hands me one mathematically correct barn after another, and I doctor them up with cute allurements so that fools will desire to buy, sell, breed, sleep, love, hate, curse, and pray in them! I do this with devilish cleverness to their entire delight! Once I dreamed of painting wind on the sea and the skimming flight of cloud shadows over the tops of trees! Now . . . [*He laughs*] But pride is a sin—even in a memory of the long deceased! Blessed are the poor in spirit! [*He subsides weakly on his chair, his hand pressed to his heart*]

Cybel [like an idol]. Go home and sleep. Your wife'll be worried.

Dion. She knows—but she'll never admit to herself that her husband ever entered your door. [Mocking] Aren't women loyal—to their vanity and their other things!

Cybel. Brown is coming soon, don't forget.

Dion. He knows too and can't admit. Perhaps he needs me here—unknown. What first aroused his passion to possess you exclusively, do you think? Because he knew you loved me, and he felt himself cheated. He wanted what he thought was my love of the flesh! He feels I have no right to love. He'd like to steal it as he steals my ideas—complacently—righteously. Oh, the good Brown!

Cybel. But you like him, too! You're brothers, I guess, somehow. Well, remember he's paying, he'll pay—in some way or other.

Dion [raising his head as if starting to remove the mask]. I know. Poor Billy! God forgive me the evil I've done him!

Cybel [reaching out and taking his hand]. Poor boy!

[*Dion presses her hand convulsively*]

Dion [with forced harshness]. Well, homeward, Christian soldier! I'm off. Bye-bye, Mother Earth!

[*He starts to go out. She seems about to let him go, then suddenly starts and calls with deep grief*]

Cybel. Dion!

[*He looks at her. There is a pause. He comes slowly back. She speaks strangely, in a deep, far-off voice, and yet like a mother talking to her little son*]

You mustn't forget to kiss me before you go, Dion. [*She removes his mask*] Haven't

I told you to take off your mask in the house? Look at me, Dion. I've—just—seen—something. I'm afraid you're going away a long, long ways. I'm afraid I won't see you again for a long, long time. So it's good-by, dear.

[She kisses him gently. He begins to sob. She hands him back his mask]

Here you are. Don't get hurt. Remember, it's all a game, and after you're asleep, I'll tuck you in.

Dion *[in a choking, heart-broken cry]*. Mother! *[Then he claps on his mask with a terrible effort of will—mockingly]* Go to the devil, you sentimental old pig! See you tomorrow! *[He goes, whistling, slamming the door]*

Cybel *[like an idol again]*. What's the good of bearing children? What's the use of giving birth to death?

[She sighs wearily, turns, puts a plug in the piano, which starts up its old sentimental tune. At the same moment BROWN enters quietly from the left. He is the ideal of the still youthful, good-looking, well-groomed, successful provincial American of forty. Just now, he is plainly perturbed. He is not able to see either CYBEL's face or her mask]

Brown. Cybel!

[She starts, jams off the music and reaches for her mask but has no time to put it on]

Wasn't that Dion I just saw going out—after all your promises never to see him!

[She turns like an idol, holding the mask behind her. He stares, bewildered—stammers]

I—I beg your pardon—I thought . . .

Cybel *[in her strange voice]*. Cybel's gone out to dig in the earth and pray.

Brown *[with more assurance]*. But—aren't those her clothes?

Cybel. Cybel doesn't want people to see me naked. I'm her sister. Dion came to see me.

Brown *[relieved]*. So that's what he's up to, is it? *[With a pitying sigh]* Poor Margaret! *[With playful reproof]* You really shouldn't encourage him. He's married and got three big sons.

Cybel. And you haven't.

Brown *[stung]*. No, I'm not married.

Cybel. He and I were friends.

Brown *[with a playful wink]*. Yes, I can

imagine how the platonic must appeal to Dion's pure, innocent type! It's no good your kidding me about Dion. We've been friends since we were kids. I know him in and out. I've always stood up for him whatever he's done—so you can be perfectly frank. I only spoke as I did on account of Margaret—his wife—it's pretty tough on her.

Cybel. You love his wife.

Brown *[scandalized]*. What? What are you talking about? *[Uncertainly]* Don't be a fool! *[After a pause—as if impelled by an intense curiosity]* So Dion is your lover, eh? That's very interesting. *[He pulls his chair closer to hers]* Sit down. Let's talk.

[She continues to stand, the mask held behind her]

Tell me—I've always been curious—what is it that makes Dion so attractive to women—especially certain types of women, if you'll pardon me? He always has been, and yet I never could see exactly what they saw in him. Is it his looks—or because he's such a violent sensualist—or because he poses as artistic and temperamental—or because he's so wild—or just what is it?

Cybel. He's alive!

[BROWN suddenly takes one of her hands and kisses it]

Brown *[insinuatingly]*. Well, don't you think I'm alive, too? *[Eagerly]* Listen. Would you consider giving up Dion—and letting me take care of you under a similar arrangement to the one I've made with Cybel? I like you, you can see that. I won't bother you much—I'm much too busy—you can do what you like—lead your own life—except for seeing him.

[He stops. There is a pause. She stares ahead unmoved as if she hadn't heard. He pleads]

Well—what do you say? Please do!

Cybel *[her voice very weary]*. Cybel said to tell you she'd be back next week, Mr. Brown.

Brown *[with queer agony]*. You mean you won't? Don't be so cruel! I love you!

[She walks away. He clutches at her pleadingly]

At least—I'll give you anything you ask!—please promise me you won't see Dion Anthony again!

Cybel *[with deep grief]*. He will never see me again, I promise you. Good-by!

Brown *[jubilantly, kissing her hand—pc-*

lately]. Thank you! Thank you! I'm exceedingly grateful. [*Tactfully*] I won't disturb you any further. Please forgive my intrusion, and remember me to Cybel when you write. [*He bows, turns, and goes out*]

SCENE TWO

The drafting room in BROWN's office. DION's drafting table with a high stool in front is at the center. Another stool is to the left of it. At the right is a bench. It is in the evening of the same day. The black wall drop has windows painted on it with a dim, street-lighted view of black houses across the way.

DION is sitting on the stool in back of the table, reading aloud from the "Imitation of Christ" by Thomas à Kempis to his mask, which is on the table before him. His own face is gentler, more spiritual, more saint-like and ascetic than ever before.

Dion [*like a priest, offering up prayers for the dying*]. "Quickly must thou be gone from hence, see then how matters stand with thee. Ah, fool—learn now to die to the world that thou mayst begin to live with Christ! Do now, beloved, do now all thou canst because thou knowst not when thou shalt die; nor dost thou know what shall befall thee after death. Keep thyself as a pilgrim, and a stranger upon earth, to whom the affairs of this world do not—belong! Keep thy heart free and raised upwards to God, because thou hast not here a lasting abode. 'Because at what hour you know not the Son of Man will come!'" Amen. [*He raises his hand over the mask as if he were blessing it, closes the book and puts it back in his pocket. He raises the mask in his hands and stares at it with a pitying tenderness*] Peace, poor tortured one, brave pitiful pride of man, the hour of our deliverance comes. Tomorrow we may be with Him in Paradise!

[*He kisses it on the lips and sets it down again. There is the noise of footsteps climbing the stairs in the hallway. He grabs up the mask in a sudden panic and, as a knock comes on the door, he claps it on and calls mockingly*] Come in, Mrs. Anthony, come in!

[MARGARET enters. In one hand behind her, hidden from him, is the mask of the brave face she puts on before the

world to hide her suffering and disillusionment, and which she has just taken off. Her own face is still sweet and pretty but lined, drawn and care-worn for its years, sad, resigned, but a bit querulous]

Margaret [*wearily reproving*]. Thank goodness I've found you! Why haven't you been home the last two days? It's bad enough your drinking again without your staying away and worrying us to death!

Dion [*bitterly*]. My ears knew her footsteps. One gets to recognize everything—and to see nothing!

Margaret. I finally sent the boys out looking for you and came myself. [*With tired solicitude*] I suppose you haven't eaten a thing, as usual. Won't you come home and let me fry you a chop?

Dion [*wonderingly*]. Can Margaret still love Dion Anthony? Is it possible she does?

Margaret [*forcing a tired smile*]. I suppose so, Dion. I certainly oughtn't to, had I?

Dion [*in the same tone*]. And I love Margaret! What haunted, haunting ghosts we are! We dimly remember so much it will take us so many million years to forget! [*He comes forward, putting one arm around her bowed shoulders, and they kiss*]

Margaret [*patting his hand affectionately*]. No, you certainly don't deserve it. When I stop to think of all you've made me go through in the years since we settled down here . . . ! I really don't believe I could ever have stood it if it weren't for the boys! [*Forcing a smile*] But perhaps I would—I've always been such a big fool about you.

Dion [*a bit mockingly*]. The boys! Three strong sons! Margaret can afford to be magnanimous!

Margaret. If they didn't find you, they were coming to meet me here.

Dion [*with sudden wildness—torturedly, sinking on his knees beside her*]. Margaret! Margaret! I'm lonely! I'm frightened! I'm going away! I've got to say good-by!

Margaret [*patting his hair*]. Poor boy! Poor Dion! Come home and sleep.

Dion [*springing up frantically*]. No! I'm a man! I'm a lonely man! I can't go back! I have conceived myself! [*With desperate mockery*] Look at me, Mrs. Anthony! It's the last chance! Tomorrow I'll have moved on to the next hell! Behold your man—

the sniveling, cringing, life-denying Christian slave you have so nobly ignored in the father of your sons! Look! [*He tears the mask from his face, which is radiant with a great pure love for her and a great sympathy and tenderness*] O woman—my love—that I have sinned against in my sick pride and cruelty—forgive my sins—forgive my solitude—forgive my sickness—forgive me! [*He kneels and kisses the hem of her dress*]

[*MARGARET, who has been staring at him in terror, raises her mask to ward off his face*]

Margaret. Dion! Don't! I can't bear it! You're like a ghost! You're dead! Oh, my God! Help! Help!

[*She falls back fainting on the bench. He looks at her—then takes her hand which holds her mask and looks at that face—gently*]

And now I am permitted to understand and love you, too! [*He kisses the mask first—then kisses her face, murmuring*] And you, sweetheart! Blessed, thrice blessed are the meek!

[*There is a sound of heavy, hurrying footsteps on the stairs. He puts on his mask in haste. The THREE SONS rush into the room. The Eldest is about fourteen, the two others thirteen and twelve. They look healthy, normal likeable boys, with much the same quality as BILLY BROWN's in Act One, Scene One. They stop short and stiffen all in a row, staring from the woman on the bench to their father, accusingly*]

Eldest. We heard someone yell. It sounded like Mother.

Dion [*defensively*]. No. It was this lady—my wife.

Eldest. But hasn't Mother come yet?

Dion [*going to MARGARET*]. Yes. Your Mother is here. [*He stands between them and puts her mask over MARGARET's face—then steps back*] She has fainted. You'd better bring her to.

Boys. Mother!

[*They run to her side, kneel and rub her wrists. The ELDEST smooths back her hair*]

Dion [*watching them*]. At least I am leaving her well provided for. [*He addresses them directly*] Tell your mother she'll get word from Mr. Brown's house. I must pay

him a farewell call. I am going. Good-by.

[*They stop, staring at him fixedly, with eyes a mixture of bewilderment, distrust and hurt*]

Eldest [*awkwardly and shamefacedly*]. Honest, I think you ought to have . . .

Second. Yes, honest you ought . . .

Youngest. Yes, honest . . .

Dion [*in a friendly tone*]. I know. But I couldn't. That's for you who can. You must inherit the earth for her. Don't forget now, boys. Good-by.

Boys [*in the same awkward, self-conscious tone, one after another*]. Good-by—good-by—good-by. [*DION goes*]

SCENE THREE

The library of WILLIAM BROWN's home—night of the same day. A backdrop of carefully painted, prosperous, bourgeois culture, bookcases filled with sets, etc. The heavy table in the center of the room is expensive. The leather armchair at the left of it and the couch at the right are opulently comfortable. The reading lamp on the table is the only light.

BROWN sits in the chair at the left, reading an architectural periodical. His expression is composed and gravely receptive. In outline, his face suggests a Roman consul on an old coin. There is an incongruous distinction about it, the quality of unquestioning faith in the finality of its achievement.

There is a sudden loud thumping on the front door and the ringing of the bell. BROWN frowns and listens as a servant answers. DION's voice can be heard, raised mockingly.

Dion. Tell him it's the devil come to conclude a bargain.

Brown [*suppressing annoyance, and calling out with forced good nature*]. Come on in, Dion.

[*DION enters. He is in a wild state. His clothes are disheveled; his masked face has a terrible deathlike intensity—its mocking irony has become so cruelly malignant as to give him the appearance of a real demon, tortured into torturing others*]

Sit down.

Dion [*standing and singing*]. William

Brown's soul lies moldering in the crib, but his body goes marching on!

Brown [maintaining the same indulgent, big-brotherly tone, which he tries to hold throughout the scene]. Not so loud, for Pete's sake! I don't mind—but I've got neighbors.

Dion. Hate them! Fear thy neighbor as thyself! That's the leaden rule for the safe and sane. [*Advancing to the table with a sort of deadly calm.*] Listen! One day when I was four years old, a boy sneaked up behind when I was drawing a picture in the sand he couldn't draw and hit me on the head with a stick and kicked out my picture and laughed when I cried. It wasn't what he'd done that made me cry, but him! I had loved and trusted him, and suddenly the good God was disproved in his person and the evil and injustice of Man was born! Everyone called me cry-baby, so I became silent for life and designed a mask of the Bad Boy Pan in which to live and rebel against that other boy's God and protect myself from His cruelty. And that other boy, secretly he felt ashamed but he couldn't acknowledge it; so from that day he instinctively developed into the good boy, the good friend, the good man, William Brown!

Brown [shamefacedly]. I remember now. It was a dirty trick. [*With a trace of resentment.*] Sit down. You know where the booze is. Have a drink, if you like. But I guess you've had enough already.

Dion [looking at him fixedly for a moment—then speaking strangely]. Thanks be to Brown for reminding me. I must drink. [*He goes and gets a bottle of whisky and a glass.*]

Brown [with a good-humored shrug]. All right. It's your funeral.

Dion [returning and pouring out a big drink in the tumbler]. And William Brown's! When I die, he goes to hell! Sköäl!

[He drinks and stares malevolently. In spite of himself, BROWN is uneasy. There is a pause.]

Brown [with forced casualness]. You've been on this toot for a week now.

Dion [tauntingly]. I've been celebrating the acceptance of my design for the cathedral.

Brown [humorously]. You certainly helped me a lot on it.

Dion [with a harsh laugh]. O perfect Brown! Never mind! I'll make him look in my mirror yet—and drown in it! [*He pours out another big drink.*]

Brown [rather tauntingly]. Go easy. I don't want your corpse on my hands.

Dion. But I do. [*He drinks.*] Brown will still need me—to reassure him he's alive! I've loved, lusted, won and lost, sang and wept! I've been life's lover! I've fulfilled her will, and if she's through with me now, it's only because I was too weak to dominate her in turn. It isn't enough to be her creature—you've got to create her, or she requests you to destroy yourself.

Brown [good-naturedly]. Nonsense. Go home and get some sleep.

Dion [as if he hadn't heard—bitingly]. But to be neither creature nor creator! To exist only in her indifference! To be unloved by life!

[*BROWN stirs uneasily.*] To be merely a successful freak, the result of some snide neutralizing of life forces—a spineless cactus—a wild boar of the mountains altered into a packer's hog eating to become food—a Don Juan inspired to romance by a monkey's glands—and to have Life not even think you funny enough to see!

Brown [stung—angrily]. Bosh!

Dion. Consider Mr. Brown. His parents bore him on earth as if they were thereby entering him in a baby parade with prizes for the fattest—and he's still being wheeled along in the procession, too fat now to learn to walk, let alone to dance or run, and he'll never live until his liberated dust quickens into earth!

Brown [gruffly]. Rave on! [*With forced good-nature.*] Well, Dion, at any rate, I'm satisfied.

Dion [quickly and malevolently]. No! Brown isn't satisfied! He's piled on layers of protective fat, but vaguely, deeply he feels at his heart the gnawing of a doubt! And I'm interested in that germ which wriggles like a question mark of insecurity in his blood, because it's part of the creative life Brown's stolen from me!

Brown [forcing a sour grin]. Steal germs? I thought you caught them.

Dion [as if he hadn't heard]. It's mine—and I'm interested in seeing it thrive and breed and become multitudes and eat until Brown is consumed!

Brown [unable to restrain a shudder].

Sometimes when you're drunk, you're positively evil, do you know it?

Dion [somerly]. When Pan was forbidden the light and warmth of the sun, he grew sensitive and self-conscious and proud and revengeful—and became Prince of Darkness.

Brown [jocularly]. You don't fit the rôle of Pan, Dion. It sounds to me like Bacchus, alias the Demon Rum, doing the talking.

[Dion recovers from his spasm with a start and stares at Brown with terrible hatred. There is a pause. In spite of himself, Brown squirms and adopts a placating tone]

Go home. Be a good scout. It's all well enough celebrating our design being accepted, but—

Dion [in a steely voice]. I've been the brains! I've been the design! I've designed even his success—drunk and laughing at him—laughing at his career! Not proud! Sick! Sick of myself and him! Designing and getting drunk! Saving my woman and children! [He laughs] Ha! And this cathedral is my masterpiece! It will make Brown the most eminent architect in this state of God's Country. I put a lot into it—what was left of my life! It's one vivid blasphemy from sidewalk to the tips of its spires!—but so concealed that the fools will never know. They'll kneel and worship the ironic Silenus who tells them the best good is never to be born! [He laughs triumphantly] Well, blasphemy is faith, isn't it? In self-preservation the devil must believe! But Mr. Brown, the Great Brown, has no faith! He couldn't design a cathedral without it looking like the First Supernatural Bank! He only believes in the immortality of the moral belly! [He laughs wildly—then sinks down in his chair, gasping, his hands pressed to his heart. Then suddenly he becomes deadly calm and pronounces like a cruel malignant condemnation] From now on, Brown will never design anything. He will devote his life to renovating the house of my Cybel into a home for my Margaret!

Brown [springing to his feet, his face convulsed with strange agony]. I've stood enough! How dare you . . . !

Dion [his voice like a probe]. Why has no woman ever loved him? Why has he always been the Big Brother, the Friend? Isn't their trust—a contempt?

Brown. You lie!

Dion. Why has he never been able to love—since my Margaret? Why has he never married? Why has he tried to steal Cybel, as he once tried to steal Margaret? Isn't it out of revenge—and envy?

Brown [violently]. Rot! I wanted Cybel, and I bought her!

Dion. Brown bought her for me! She has loved me more than he will ever know!

Brown. You lie! [Furiously] I'll throw her back on the street!

Dion. To me! To her fellow creature! Why hasn't Brown had children—he who loves children—he who loves *my* children—he who envies me *my* children?

Brown [brokenly]. I'm not ashamed to envy you them!

Dion. They like Brown, too—as a friend—as an equal—as Margaret has always liked him . . .

Brown [brokenly]. And as I've liked her!

Dion. How many million times Brown has thought how much better for her it would have been if she'd chosen him instead!

Brown [torturedly]. You lie! [With sudden frenzied defiance] All right! If you force me to say it, I do love Margaret! I always have loved her and you've always known I did!

Dion [with a terrible composure]. No! That is merely the appearance, not the truth! Brown loves me! He loves me because I have always possessed the power he needed for love, because I am love!

Brown [frenziedly]. You drunken bum! [He leaps on Dion and grabs him by the throat]

Dion [triumphantly, staring into his eyes]. Ah! Now he looks into the mirror! Now he sees his face!

[Brown lets go of him and staggers back to his chair, pale and trembling]

Brown [humbly]. Stop, for God's sake! You're mad!

Dion [sinking in his chair, more and more weakly]. I'm done. My heart, not Brown . . . [Mockingly] My last will and testament! I leave Dion Anthony to William Brown—for him to love and obey—for him to become me—then my Margaret will love me—my children will love me—Mr. and Mrs. Brown and sons, happily ever after! [Staggering to his full height and looking upward defiantly] Nothing more—

but Man's last gesture—by which he conquers—to laugh! Ha! . . . [*He begins, stops as if paralyzed, and drops on his knees by BROWN's chair, his mask falling off, his Christian martyr's face at the point of death*] Forgive me, Billy. Bury me, hide me, forget me for your own happiness! May Margaret love you! May you design the Temple of Man's Soul! Blessed are the meek and the poor in spirit! [*He kisses BROWN's feet—then more and more weakly and childishly*] What was the prayer, Billy? I'm getting so sleepy. . . .

Brown [*in a trance-like tone*]. "Our Father who art in Heaven."

Dion [*drowsily*]. "Our Father." . . .

[*He dies. There is a pause. BROWN remains in a stupor for a moment—then stirs himself, puts his hand on DION's breast*]

Brown [*dully*]. He's dead—at last. [*He says this mechanically but the last two words awaken him—wonderingly*] At last? [*With triumph*] At last! [*He stares at DION's real face contemptuously*] So that's the poor weakling you really were! No wonder you hid! And I've always been afraid of you—yes, I'll confess it now, in awe of you! Paugh! [*He picks up the mask from the floor*] No, not of you! Of this! Say what you like, it's strong if it is bad! And this is what Margaret loved, not you! Not you! This man!—this man who willed himself to me! [*Struck by an idea, he jumps to his feet*] By God!

[*He slowly starts to put the mask on. A knocking comes on the street door. He starts guiltily, laying the mask on the table. Then he picks it up again quickly, takes the dead body and carries it off left. He reappears immediately and goes to the front door as the knocking recommences. He calls gruffly*]

Hello! Who's there?

Margaret. It's Margaret, Billy. I'm looking for Dion.

Brown [*uncertainly*]. Oh—all right . . . [*Unfastening the door*] Come in. Hello, Margaret. Hello, boys! He's here. He's asleep. I—I was just dozing off, too.

[*MARGARET enters. She is wearing her mask. The THREE SONS are with her*]

Margaret [*seeing the bottle, forcing a laugh*]. Has he been celebrating?

Brown [*with strange glibness now*]. No. I

was. He wasn't. He said he'd sworn off tonight—forever—for your sake—and the kids!

Margaret [*with amazed joy*]. Dion said that? [*Hastily defensive*] But of course he never does drink much. Where is he?

Brown. Upstairs. I'll wake him. He felt bad. He took off his clothes to take a bath before he lay down. You just wait here.

[*She sits in the chair where DION had sat and stares straight before her. The SONS group around her, as if for a family photo. BROWN hurries out*]

Margaret. It's late to keep you boys up. Aren't you sleepy?

Boys. No, Mother.

Margaret [*proudly*]. I'm glad to have three such strong boys to protect me.

Eldest [*boastingly*]. We'd kill anyone that touched you, wouldn't we?

Next. You bet! We'd make him wish he hadn't!

Youngest. You bet!

Margaret. You're Mother's brave boys! [*She laughs fondly—then asks curiously*] Do you like Mr. Brown?

Eldest. Sure thing! He's a regular fellow.

Next. He's all right!

Youngest. Sure thing!

Margaret [*half to herself*]. Your father claims he steals his ideas.

Eldest [*with a sheepish grin*]. I'll bet father said that when he was—just talking.

Next. Mr. Brown doesn't have to steal, does he?

Youngest. I should say not! He's awful rich.

Margaret. Do you love your father?

Eldest [*scuffling—embarrassed*]. Why—of course . . .

Next [*ditto*]. Sure thing!

Youngest. Sure I do.

Margaret [*with a sigh*]. I think you'd better start on before—right now—before your father comes . . . He'll be very sick and nervous, and he'll want to be quiet. So run along!

Boys. All right.

[*They file out and close the front door as BROWN, dressed in DION's clothes and wearing his mask, appears at the door*]

Margaret [*taking off her mask, speaking gladly*] Dion!

[*She stares wonderingly at him and he*

at her; she goes to him and puts an arm around him]

Poor dear, do you feel sick? [*He nods*] But you look—[*squeezing his arms*] why, you actually feel stronger and better already! Is it true what Billy told me—about your swearing off forever?

[*He nods. She exclaims intensely*] Oh, if you'll only—and get well—we can still be so happy! Give Mother a kiss.

[*They kiss. A shudder passes through both of them. She breaks away, laughing with aroused desire*]

Why, Dion? Aren't you ashamed? You haven't kissed me like that in ages!

Brown [*his voice imitating Dion's and muffled by the mask*]. I've wanted to, Margaret!

Margaret [*gayly and coquettishly now*]. Were you afraid I'd spurn you? Why, Dion, something has happened. It's like a miracle! Even your voice is changed! It actually sounds younger, do you know it? [*Solicitously*] But you must be worn out. Let's go home. [*With an impulsive movement she flings her arms wide open, throwing her mask away from her as if suddenly no longer needing it*] Oh, I'm beginning to feel so happy, Dion—so happy!

Brown [*stifledly*]. Let's go home.

[*She puts her arm around him. They walk to the door*]

ACT THREE

SCENE ONE

The drafting room and private office of BROWN are both shown. The former is at the left, the latter at the right of a dividing wall at the center. The arrangement of furniture in each room is the same as in the previous scenes. It is ten in the morning of a day about a month later. The backdrop for both rooms is of plain wall with a few tacked-up designs and blue prints painted on it.

TWO DRAFTSMEN, a middle-aged man and a young man, both stoop-shouldered, are sitting on stools behind what was formerly DION's table. They are tracing plans. They talk as they work.

Older Draftsman. W. B. is late again.

Younger Draftsman. Wonder what's got into him the last month?

[*There is a pause. They work silently*] Older Draftsman. Yes, ever since he fired Dion. . . .

Younger Draftsman. Funny his firing him all of a sudden like that.

[*There is a pause. They work*] Older Draftsman. I haven't seen Dion around town since then. Have you?

Younger Draftsman. No, not since Brown told us he'd canned him. I suppose he's off drowning his sorrow!

Older Draftsman. I heard someone had seen him at home and he was sober and looking fine.

[*There is a pause. They work*] Younger Draftsman. What got into Brown? They say he fired all his old servants that same day and only uses his house to sleep in.

Older Draftsman [*with a sneer*]. Artistic temperament, maybe—the real name of which is swelled head!

[*There is a noise of footsteps from the hall. He whispers warningly*] Ssstt!

[*They bend over their table. MARGARET enters. She does not need to wear a mask now. Her face has regained the self-confident spirit of its youth, her eyes shine with happiness*]

Margaret [*heartily*]. Good morning! What a lovely day!

Both [*perfunctorily*]. Good morning, Mrs. Anthony.

Margaret [*looking around*]. You've been changing around in here, haven't you? Where is Dion?

[*They stare at her*] I forgot to tell him something important this morning, and our phone's out of order. So if you'll tell him I'm here . . .

[*They don't move. There is a pause.*]

MARGARET speaks stiffly]

Oh, I realize Mr. Brown has given strict orders Dion is not to be disturbed, but surely. . . . [*Sharply*] Where is my husband, please?

Older Draftsman. We don't know.

Margaret. You don't know?

Younger Draftsman. We haven't seen him.

Margaret. Why, he left home at eighty!

Older Draftsman. To come here?

Younger Draftsman. This morning?

Margaret [*provoked*]. Why, of course, to come here—as he does every day!

[*They stare at her. There is a pause*]
 Older Draftsman [*evasively*]. We haven't seen him.

Margaret [*with asperity*]. Where is Mr. Brown?

Younger Draftsman [*at a noise of footsteps from the hall—sulkily*]. Coming now.

[BROWN enters. He is now wearing a mask which is an exact likeness of his face as it was in the last scene—the self-assured success. When he sees MARGARET, he starts back apprehensively]

Brown [*immediately controlling himself—breezily*]. Hello, Margaret! This is a pleasant surprise! [*He holds out his hand*]
 Margaret [*hardly taking it—reservedly*]. Good morning.

Brown [*turning quickly to the DRAFTSMEN*]. I hope you explained to Mrs. Anthony how busy Dion . . .

Margaret [*interrupting him—stiffly*]. I certainly can't understand . . .

Brown [*hastily*]. I'll explain. Come in here and be comfortable. [*He throws open the door and ushers her into his private office*]

Older Draftsman. Dion must be putting over some bluff on her.

Younger Draftsman. Pretending he's still here—and Brown's helping him. . . .

Older Draftsman. But why should Brown, after he . . . ?

Younger Draftsman. Well, I suppose . . . Search me.

[*They work*]

Brown. Have a chair, Margaret.

[*She sits on the chair stiffly. He sits behind the desk*]

Margaret [*coldly*]. I'd like some explanation. . . .

Brown [*coaxingly*]. Now, don't get angry, Margaret! Dion is hard at work on his design for the new State Capitol, and I don't want him disturbed, not even by you! So be a good sport! It's for his own good, remember! I asked him to explain to you.

Margaret [*relenting*]. He told me you'd agreed to ask me and the boys not to come here—but then, we hardly ever did.

Brown. But you might! [*With confidential friendliness*] This is for his sake, Margaret. I know Dion. He's got to be able to work without distractions. He's not the ordinary man—you appreciate that. And this design means his whole future! He's to

get full credit for it, and as soon as it's accepted, I take him into partnership. It's all agreed. And after that I'm going to take a long vacation—go to Europe for a couple of years—and leave everything here in Dion's hands! Hasn't he told you all this?

Margaret [*joyful now*]. Yes—but I could hardly believe . . . [*Proudly*] I'm sure he can do it. He's been like a new man lately, so full of ambition and energy! It's made me so happy! [*She stops in confusion*]

Brown [*deeply moved, and taking her hand impulsively*]. And it has made me happy, too!

Margaret [*confused—with an amused laugh*]. Why, Billy Brown! For a moment, I thought it was Dion, your voice sounded so much . . . !

Brown [*with sudden desperation*]. Margaret, I've got to tell you! I can't go on like this any longer! I've got to confess. . . ! There's something. . . !

Margaret [*alarmed*]. Not—not about Dion?

Brown [*harshly*]. To hell with Dion! To hell with Billy Brown! [*He tears off his mask and reveals a suffering face that is ravaged and haggard, his own face tortured and distorted by the demon of Dion's mask*] Think of me! I love you, Margaret! Leave him! I've always loved you! Come away with me! I'll sell out here! We'll go abroad and be happy!

Margaret [*amazed*]. Billy Brown, do you realize what you're saying? [*With a shudder*] Are you crazy? Your face—is terrible. You're sick! Shall I phone for a doctor?

Brown [*turning away slowly and putting on his mask—dully*]. No. I've been on the verge of a breakdown—for some time. I get spells. . . . I'm better now. [*He turns back to her*] Forgive me! Forget what I said! But, for all our sakes, don't come here again.

Margaret [*coldly*]. After this—I assure you. . . ! [*Looking at him with pained incredulity*] Why, Billy—I simply won't believe—after all these years. . . !

Brown. It will never happen again. Good-by.

Margaret. Good-by. [*Wishing to leave on a pleasant change of subject—forcing a smile*] Don't work Dion to death! He's never home for dinner any more.

[*She goes out past the DRAFTSMEN.*]

BROWN sits down at his desk, taking off the mask again. He stares at it with bitter, cynical amusement]

Brown. You're dead, William Brown, dead beyond hope of resurrection! It's the Dion you buried in your garden who killed you, not you him! It's Margaret's husband who . . . [*He laughs harshly*] Paradise by proxy! Love by mistaken identity! God! [*This is almost a prayer—then fiercely defiant*] But it is paradise! I do love!

[*As he is speaking, a well-dressed, important, stout man enters the drafting room. He is carrying a rolled-up plan in his hand. He nods condescendingly and goes directly to BROWN's door, on which he raps sharply, and, without waiting for an answer, turns the knob. BROWN has just time to turn his head and get his mask on*]

Man [*briskly*]. Ah, good morning! I came right in. Hope I didn't disturb . . . ?

Brown [*the successful architect now—urbanely*]. Not at all, sir. How are you?

[*They shake hands*]

Sit down. Have a cigar. And now what can I do for you this morning?

Man [*unrolling his plan*]. It's your plan. My wife and I have been going over it again. We like it—and we don't—and when a man plans to lay out half a million, why he wants everything exactly right, eh?

[*Brown nods*]

It's too cold, too spare, too like a tomb, if you'll pardon me, for a liveable home. Can't you liven it up, put in some decorations, make it fancier and warmer—you know what I mean. [*He looks at BROWN a bit doubtfully*] People tell me you had an assistant, Anthony, who was a real shark on these details but that you've fired him—

Brown [*suavely*]. Gossip! He's still with me but, for reasons of his own, doesn't wish it known. Yes, I trained him, and he's very ingenious. I'll turn this right over to him and instruct him to carry out your wishes. . . .

SCENE TWO

The library of BROWN's home about eight the same night. BROWN can be heard feeling his way in through the dark. He switches on the reading lamp on the table. Directly

under it on a sort of stand is the mask of DION, its empty eyes staring front.

BROWN takes off his own mask and lays it on the table before DION's. He flings himself down in the chair and stares without moving into the eyes of DION's mask. Finally, he begins to talk to it in a bitter, mocking tone.

Brown. Listen! Today was a narrow escape—for us! We can't avoid discovery much longer. We must get our plot to working! We've already made William Brown's will, leaving you his money and business. We must hustle off to Europe now—and murder him there! [*A bit tauntingly*] Then you—the I in you—I will live with Margaret happily ever after. [*More tauntingly*] She will have children by me! [*He seems to hear some mocking denial from the mask. He bends toward it*] What? [*With a sneer*] Anyway, that doesn't matter! Your children already love me more than they ever loved you! And Margaret loves me more! You think you've won, do you—that I've got to vanish into you in order to live? Not yet, my friend! Never! Wait! Gradually Margaret will love what is beneath—me! Little by little I'll teach her to know me, and then finally I'll reveal myself to her, and confess that I stole your place out of love for her, and she'll understand and forgive and love me! And you'll be forgotten! Ha! [*Again he bends down to the mask as if listening—torturedly*] What's that? She'll never believe? She'll never see? She'll never understand? You lie, devil! [*He reaches out his hands as if to take the mask by the throat, then shrinks back with a shudder of hopeless despair*] God have mercy! Let me believe! Blessed are the merciful! Let me obtain mercy! [*He waits, his face upturned—pleadingly*] Not yet? [*Despairingly*] Never?

[*There is a pause. Then, in a sudden panic of dread, he reaches out for the mask of DION like a dope fiend after a drug. As soon as he holds it, he seems to gain strength and is able to force a sad laugh*]

Now I am drinking your strength, Dion—strength to love in this world and die and sleep and become fertile earth, as you are becoming now in my garden—your weakness the strength of my flowers, your failure as an artist painting their petals with

life! [*With bravado*] Come with me while Margaret's bridegroom dresses in your clothes, Mr. Anthony! I need the devil when I'm in the dark! [*He goes off out of the room, but can be heard talking*] Your clothes begin to fit me better than my own! Hurry, Brother! It's time we were home. Our wife is waiting! [*He reappears, having changed his coat and trousers*] Come with me and tell her again I love her! Come and hear her tell me how she loves you! [*He suddenly cannot help kissing the mask*] I love you because she loves you! My kisses on your lips are for her! [*He puts the mask over his face and stands for a moment, seeming to grow tall and proud—then with a laugh of bold self-assurance*] Out by the back way! I mustn't forget I'm a desperate criminal, pursued by God, and by myself! [*He goes out, laughing with amused satisfaction*]

SCENE THREE

The sitting-room of MARGARET'S home. It is about half an hour after the last scene. MARGARET sits on the sofa, waiting with the anxious, impatient expectancy of one deeply in love. She is dressed with a careful, subtle extra touch to attract the eye. She looks young and happy. She is trying to read a book. The front door is heard opening and closing. She leaps up and runs back to throw her arms around BROWN as he enters from the right, rear. She kisses him passionately. He recoils with a sort of guilt.

Margaret [*laughingly*]. Why, you hateful old thing, you! I really believe you were trying to avoid kissing me! Well, just for that, I'll never . . .

Brown [*with fierce, defiant passion, kissing her again and again*]. Margaret!

Margaret. Call me Peggy again. You used to when you really loved me [*Softly*] Remember the school commencement dance—you and I on the dock in the moonlight?

Brown [*with pain*]. No. [*He takes his arms from around her*]

Margaret [*still holding him—with a laugh*]. Well, I like that! You old bear, you! Why not?

Brown [*sadly*]. It was so long ago.

Margaret [*a bit melancholy*]. You mean you don't want to be reminded that we're getting old?

Brown. Yes. [*He kisses her gently*] I'm tired. Let's sit down.

[*They sit on the sofa, his arm about her, her head on his shoulder*]

Margaret [*with a happy sigh*]. I don't mind remembering—now I'm happy. It's only when I'm unhappy that it hurts—and I've been so happy lately, dear—and so grateful to you!

[*He stirs uneasily. She goes on joyfully*]

Everything's changed! I'd gotten pretty resigned to—and sad and hopeless, too—and then all at once you turn right around, and everything is the same as when we were first married—much better even, for I was never sure of you then. You were always so strange and aloof and alone, it seemed I was never really touching you. But now I feel you've become quite human—like me—and I'm so happy, dear! [*She kisses him*]

Brown [*his voice trembling*]. Then I have made you happy—happier than ever before—no matter what happens?

[*She nods*]

Then—that justifies everything! [*He forces a laugh*]

Margaret. Of course it does! I've always known that. But you—you wouldn't be—or you couldn't be—and I could never help you—and all the time I knew you were so lonely! I could always hear you calling to me that you were lost, but I couldn't find the path to you because I was lost, too! That's an awful way for a wife to feel! [*She laughs—joyfully*] But now you're here! You're mine! You're my long-lost lover, and my husband, and my big boy, too!

Brown [*with a trace of jealousy*]. Where are your other big boys tonight?

Margaret. Out to a dance. They've all acquired girls, I'll have you know.

Brown [*mockingly*]. Aren't you jealous?

Margaret [*gayly*]. Of course! Terribly! But I'm diplomatic. I don't let them see. [*Changing the subject*] Believe me, they've noticed the change in you! The eldest was saying to me to-day: "It's great not to have Father so nervous any more. Why, he's a regular sport when he gets started!" And the other two said very solemnly: "You bet!" [*She laughs*]

Brown [*brokenly*]. I—I'm glad.

Margaret. Dion! You're crying!

[*BROWN, stung by the name, gets up*]

Brown [harshly]. Nonsense! Did you ever know Dion to cry about anyone?

Margaret [sadly]. You couldn't—then. You were too lonely. You had no one to cry to.

[BROWN goes and takes a rolled-up plan from the table drawer]

Brown [dully]. I've got to do some work.

Margaret [disappointedly]. What, has that old Billy Brown got you to work at home again, too?

Brown [ironically]. It's for Dion's good, you know—and yours.

Margaret [making the best of it—cheerfully]. All right. I won't be selfish. It really makes me proud to have you so ambitious. Let me help.

[She brings his drawing-board, which he puts on the table and pins his plans upon. She sits on the sofa and picks up her book]

Brown [carefully casual]. I hear you were in to see me today?

Margaret. Yes, and Billy wouldn't hear of it! I was quite furious until he convinced me it was all for the best. When is he going to take you into partnership?

Brown. Very soon now.

Margaret. And will he really give you full charge when he goes abroad?

Brown. Yes.

Margaret [practically]. I'd pin him down if I could. Promises are all right, but . . . [She hesitates] I don't trust him.

Brown [with a start, sharply]. What makes you say that?

Margaret. Oh, something that happened today.

Brown. What?

Margaret. I don't mean I blame him, but—to be frank, I think the Great God Brown, as you call him, is getting a bit queer, and it's time he took a vacation. Don't you?

Brown [his voice a bit excited—but guardedly]. But why? What did he do?

Margaret [hesitatingly]. Well—it's really too silly—he suddenly got awfully strange. His face scared me. It was like a corpse. Then he raved on some nonsense about he always loved me. He went on like a perfect fool!

[She looks at BROWN, who is staring at her. She becomes uneasy]

Maybe I shouldn't tell you this. He simply wasn't responsible. Then he came to him-

self and was all right and begged my pardon and seemed dreadfully sorry, and I felt sorry for him. [With a shudder] But honestly, Dion, it was just too disgusting for words to hear him! [With kind, devastating contempt] Poor Billy!

Brown [with a show of tortured derision]. Poor Billy! Poor Billy the Goat! [With mocking frenzy] I'll kill him for you! I'll serve you his heart for breakfast!

Margaret [jumping up—frightenedly]. Dion!

Brown [waving his pencil knife with grotesque flourishes]. I tell you I'll murder this God-damned disgusting Great God Brown who stands like a fatted calf in the way of our health and wealth and happiness!

[MARGARET, bewildered, not knowing how much he is pretending, puts an arm about him]

Margaret. Don't, dear! You're being horrid and strange again. It makes me afraid you haven't really changed, after all.

Brown [unheeding]. And then my wife can be happy! Ha!

[He laughs. She begins to cry. He controls himself, and pats her head gently]

All right, dear. Mr. Brown is now safely in hell. Forget him!

[MARGARET stops crying but is still worried]

Margaret. I should never have told you—but I never imagined you'd take it seriously. I've never thought of Billy Brown except as a friend, and lately not even that! He's just a stupid old fool!

Brown. Ha-ha! Didn't I say he was in hell? They're torturing him! [Controlling himself again—exhaustedly] Please leave me alone now. I've got to work.

Margaret. All right, dear. I'll go into the next room and anything you want, just call. [She pats his face—cajolingly] Is it all forgotten?

Brown. Will you be happy?

Margaret. Yes.

Brown. Then it's dead, I promise!

[She kisses him and goes out. He stares ahead, then shakes off his thoughts and concentrates on his work—mockingly]

Our beautiful new Capitol calls you, Mr. Dion! To work! We'll adroitly hide old Sileus on the cupola! Let him dance over

their law-making with his eternal leer! [*He bends over his work*]

ACT FOUR

SCENE ONE

The drafting room and BROWN's office. It is dusk of a day about a month later.

The TWO DRAFTSMEN are bent over their table, working.

BROWN, at his desk, is working feverishly over a plan. He is wearing the mask of DION. The mask of WILLIAM BROWN rests on the desk beside him. As he works, he chuckles with malicious glee and finally flings down his pencil with a flourish.

Brown. Done! In the name of the Almighty Brown, amen, amen! Here's a wondrous fair capitol! The design would do just as well for a Home for Criminal Imbeciles! Yet to them, such is my art, it will appear to possess a pure common-sense, a fat-bellied finality, as dignified as the suspenders of an assemblyman! Only to me will that pompous façade reveal itself as the wearily ironic grin of Pan as, his ears drowsy with the crumbling hum of past and future civilizations, he half-listens to the laws passed by his fleas to enslave him! Ha-ha-ha! [*He leaps grotesquely from behind his desk and cuts a few goatish capers, laughing with lustful merriment*] Long live Chief of Police Brown! District Attorney Brown! Alderman Brown! Assemblyman Brown! Mayor Brown! Congressman Brown! Governor Brown! Senator Brown! President Brown! [*He chants*] Oh, how many persons in one God make up the Good God Brown? Hahahaha!

[The TWO DRAFTSMEN in the next room have stopped work and are listening]

Younger Draftsman. Drunk as a fool!

Older Draftsman. At least Dion used to have the decency to stay away from the office—

Younger Draftsman. Funny how it's got hold of Brown so quick!

Older Draftsman. He was probably hitting it up on the Q.T. all the time.

Brown [*coming back to his desk, laughing to himself and out of breath*]. Time to become respectable again! [*He takes off the DION mask and reaches out for the WILLIAM BROWN one—then stops, with a hand*

on each, staring down on the plan with fascinated loathing. His real face is now sick, ghastly, tortured, hollow-cheeked and feverish-eyed] Ugly! Hideous! Despicable! Why must the demon in me pander to cheapness—then punish me with self-loathing and life-hatred? Why am I not strong enough to perish—or blind enough to be content? [*To heaven, bitterly but pleadingly*] Give me the strength to destroy this!—and myself!—and him!—and I will believe in Thee!

[While he has been speaking, there has been a noise from the stairs. The TWO DRAFTSMEN have bent over their work. MARGARET enters, closing the door behind her. At this sound, BROWN starts. He immediately senses who it is and exclaims with alarm]

Margaret!

[He grabs up both masks and goes into a room on the right. MARGARET enters. She looks healthy and happy, but her face wears a worried, solicitous expression]

Margaret [*to the DRAFTSMEN*]. Good morning. Oh, you needn't look worried—it's Mr. Brown I want to see, not my husband.

Younger Draftsman [*hesitatingly*]. He's locked himself in—but maybe, if you'll knock . . .

[MARGARET knocks]

Margaret [*calling somewhat embarrassedly*]. Mr. Brown!

[BROWN enters his office, wearing the WILLIAM BROWN mask. He comes quickly to the other door and unlocks it]

Brown [*with a hectic cordiality*]. Come on, Margaret! Enter! This is delightful! Sit down! What can I do for you?

Margaret [*taken aback—a bit stiffly*]. Nothing much.

Brown. Something about Dion, of course. Well, your darling pet is all right—never better!

Margaret [*coldly*]. That's a matter of opinion. I think you're working him to death.

Brown. Oh, no, not him. It's Brown who is to die. We've agreed on that.

Margaret [*giving him a queer look*]. I'm serious.

Brown. So am I. Deadly serious! Hahaha! Margaret [*checking her indignation*]. That's what I came to see you about.

Really, Dion has acted so hectic and on edge lately I'm sure he's on the verge of a breakdown.

Brown. Well, it certainly isn't drink. He hasn't had a drop. He doesn't need it! Haha! And I haven't, either, although the gossips are beginning to say I'm soused all the time! It's because I've started to laugh! Hahaha! They can't believe in joy in this town except by the bottle! What funny little people! Hahaha! When you're the Great God Brown, eh, Margaret? Hahaha!

Margaret [getting up—uneasily]. I'm afraid I—

Brown. Don't be afraid, my dear! I won't make love to you again! Honor bright! I'm too near the grave for such folly. But it must have been funny for you when you came here the last time—watching a disgusting old fool like me, eh?—too funny for words! Hahaha! *[With a sudden movement he flourishes the design before her]* Look! We've finished it! Dion has finished it! His fame is made!

Margaret [tartly]. Really, Billy, I believe you are drunk!

Brown. Nobody kisses me—so you can all believe the worst! Hahaha!

Margaret [chillingly]. Then, if Dion is through, why can't I see him?

Brown [crazily]. See Dion? See Dion? Well, why not? It's an age of miracles. The streets are full of Lazaruses. Pray! I mean—wait a moment, if you please.

[BROWN disappears into the room at the right. A moment later he reappears in the mask of DION. He holds out his arms, and MARGARET rushes into them. They kiss passionately. Finally he sits with her on the lounge]

Margaret. So you've finished it!

Brown. Yes. The Committee is coming to see it soon. I've made all the changes they'll like, the fools!

Margaret [lovingly]. And can we go on that second honeymoon, right away now?

Brown. In a week or so, I hope—as soon as I've gotten Brown off to Europe.

Margaret. Tell me—isn't he drinking hard?

Brown [laughing as BROWN did]. Haha! Soused to the ears all the time! Soused on life! He can't stand it! It's burning his insides out!

Margaret [alarmed]. Dear! I'm worried

about you. You sound as crazy as he did—when you laugh! You must rest!

Brown [controlling himself]. I'll rest in peace—when he's gone!

Margaret [with a queer look]. Why, Dion, that isn't your suit. It's just like—

Brown. It's his! We're getting to be like twins. I'm inheriting his clothes already! *[Calming himself as he sees how frightened she is]* Don't be worried, dear. I'm just a trifle elated, now the job's done. I guess I'm a bit soused on life, too!

[The COMMITTEE, three important-looking, average personages, come into the drafting room]

Margaret [forcing a smile]. Well, don't let it burn your insides out!

Brown. No danger! Mine were tempered in hell! Hahaha!

Margaret [kissing him, coaxingly]. Come home, dear—please!

Older Draftsman [knocking on the door]. The Committee is here, Mr. Brown.

Brown [hurriedly to MARGARET]. You receive them. Hand them the design. I'll get Brown. *[He raises his voice]* Come right in, gentlemen.

[He goes into the room at the right, as the COMMITTEE enter the office. When they see MARGARET, they stop in surprise]

Margaret [embarrassedly]. Good afternoon. Mr. Brown will be right with you.

[They bow. MARGARET holds out the design to them]

This is my husband's design. He finished it today.

Committee. Ah! *[They crowd around to look at it—with enthusiasm]* Perfect! Splendid! Couldn't be better! Exactly what we suggested!

Margaret [joyfully]. Then you accept it? Mr. Anthony will be so pleased!

Member. Mr. Anthony?

Another. Is he working here again?

Third. Did I understand you to say this was your husband's design?

Margaret [excitedly]. Yes! Entirely his! He's worked like a dog— *[Appalled]* you don't mean to say—Mr. Brown never told you?

[They shake their heads in solemn surprise]

Oh, the contemptible cad! I hate him!

Brown [appearing at right—mockingly]. Hate me, Margaret? Hate Brown? How

superfluous! [*Oratorically*] Gentlemen, I have been keeping a secret from you in order that you might be the more impressed when I revealed it. That design is entirely the inspiration of Mr. Dion Anthony's genius. I had nothing to do with it.

Margaret [*contritely*]. Oh, Billy! I'm sorry! Forgive me!

[BROWN, ignoring her, takes the plan from the COMMITTEE, and begins unpinning it from the board]

Brown [*mockingly*]. I can see by your faces you have approved this. You are delighted, aren't you? And why not, my dear sirs? Look at it, and look at you! Hahaha! It'll immortalize you, my good men! You'll be as death-defying a joke as any in Joe Miller! [*With a sudden complete change of tone—angrily*] You damn fools! Can't you see this is an insult—a terrible, blasphemous insult!—that this embittered failure Anthony is hurling in the teeth of our success—an insult to you, to me, to you, Margaret—and to Almighty God! [*In a frenzy of fury*] And if you are weak and cowardly enough to stand for it, I'm not!

[*He tears the plan into four pieces. The COMMITTEE stands aghast. MARGARET runs forward*]

Margaret [*in a scream*]. You coward! Dion! Dion! [*She picks up the plan and hugs it to her bosom*]

Brown [*with a sudden goatish caper*]. I'll tell him you're here.

[*He disappears, but reappears almost immediately in the mask of DION. He is imposing a terrible discipline on himself to avoid dancing and laughing. He speaks suavely*]

Everything is all right—all for the best—you mustn't get excited! A little paste, Margaret! A little paste, gentlemen! And all will be well! Life is imperfect, Brothers. Men have their faults, Sister! But with a few drops of glue much may be done! A little dab of pasty resignation here and there—and even broken hearts may be repaired to do yeoman service!

[*He has edged toward the door. They are all staring at him with petrified bewilderment. He puts his finger to his lips*]

Ssssh! This is Daddy's bedtime secret for today: Man is born broken. He lives by mending. The grace of God is glue!

[*With a quick prancing movement, he has opened the door, gone through, and closed it after him silently, shaking with suppressed laughter. He springs lightly to the side of the petrified DRAFTSMEN and speaks in a whisper*]

They will find him in the little room. Mr. William Brown is dead!

[*With light leaps he vanishes, his head thrown back, shaking with silent laughter. The sound of his feet leaping down the stairs, five at a time, can be heard. Then a pause of silence. The people in the two rooms stare. The YOUNGER DRAFTSMAN is the first to recover*]

Younger Draftsman [*rushing into the next room, and shouting in terrified tones*]. Mr. Brown is dead!

Committee. He murdered him!

[*They all run into the little room on the right. MARGARET remains, stunned with horror. They return in a moment, carrying the mask of WILLIAM BROWN, two on each side, as if they were carrying a body by the legs and shoulders. They solemnly lay him down on the couch and stand looking down at him*]

First Committeeman [*with a frightened awe*]. I can't believe he's gone.

Second Committeeman [*in the same tone*]. I can almost hear him talking. [*As if impelled, he clears his throat and addresses the mask importantly*] Mr. Brown—[*He stops short*]

Third Committeeman [*shrinking back*]. No. Dead, all right! [*Suddenly, hysterically angry and terrified*] We must take steps at once to run Anthony to earth!

Margaret [*with a heart-broken cry*]. Dion's innocent!

Younger Draftsman. I'll phone for the police, sir! [*He rushes to the phone*]

SCENE TWO

The library of WILLIAM BROWN's home. The mask of DION stands on the table beneath the light, facing front.

On his knees beside the table, facing front, stripped naked except for a white cloth around his loins, is BROWN. The clothes he has torn off in his agony are scattered on the floor. His eyes, his arms,

his whole body strain upward, his muscles writhe with his lips as they pray silently in their agonized supplication. Finally a voice seems torn out of him.

Brown. Mercy, Compassionate Savior of Man! Out of my depths I cry to you! Mercy on thy poor clod, thy clot of unhallowed earth, thy clay, the Great God Brown! Mercy, Savior! [*He seems to wait for an answer—then leaping to his feet he puts out one hand to touch the mask like a frightened child reaching out for its nurse's hand—then speaks with immediate mocking despair*] Bah! I am sorry, little children, but your kingdom is empty. God has become disgusted and moved away to some far ecstatic star where life is a dancing flame! We must die without him. [*Addressing the mask—harshly*] Together, my friend! You, too! Let Margaret suffer! Let the whole world suffer as I am suffering!

[*There is a sound of a door being pushed violently open, padding feet in slippers, and CYBEL, wearing her mask, runs into the room. She stops short on seeing BROWN and the mask, and stares from one to the other for a second in confusion. She is dressed in a black kimono robe and wears slippers over her bare feet. Her yellow hair hangs down in a great mane over her shoulders. She has grown stouter, has more of the deep objective calm of an idol*]

Brown [*staring at her—fascinated—with great peace as if her presence comforted him*]. *Cybel*! I was coming to you! How did you know?

[*CYBEL takes off her mask and looks from BROWN to the DION mask, now with great understanding*]

Cybel. So that's why you never came to me again! You are Dion Brown!

Brown [*bitterly*]. I am the remains of William Brown! [*He points to the mask of DION*] I am his murderer and his murdered!

Cybel [*with a laugh of exasperated pity*]. Oh, why can't you ever learn to leave yourselves alone and leave me alone!

Brown [*boyishly and naïvely*]. I am Billy.

Cybel [*immediately, with a motherly solicitude*]. Then run, Billy, run! They are hunting for someone! They came to my

place, hunting for a murderer, Dion! They must find a victim! They've got to quiet their fears, to cast out their devils, or they'll never sleep soundly again! They've got to absolve themselves by finding a guilty one! They've got to kill someone now, to live! You're naked! You must be Satan! Run, Billy, run! They'll come here! I ran here to warn—someone! So run away if you want to live!

Brown [*like a sulky child*]. I'm too tired. I don't want to.

Cybel [*with motherly calm*]. All right, you needn't, Billy. Don't sulk. [*As a noise comes from outside*] Anyway, it's too late. I hear them in the garden now.

[*BROWN, listening, puts out his hand and takes the mask of DION*]

Brown [*mockingly, as he gains strength*]. Thanks for this one last favor, Dion! Listen! Your avengers! Standing on your grave in the garden! Hahaha! [*He puts on the mask and springs to the left and makes a gesture as if flinging French windows open. Gayly mocking*] Welcome, dumb worshippers! I am your great God Brown! I have been advised to run from you, but it is my almighty whim to dance into escape over your prostrate souls!

[*Shouts are heard from the garden and a volley of shots. BROWN staggers back and falls on the floor by the couch, mortally wounded. CYBEL runs to his side, lifts him on to the couch, and takes off the mask of DION*]

Cybel. You can't take this to bed with you. You've got to go to sleep alone.

[*She places the mask of DION back on its stand under the light and puts on her own, just as, after a banging of doors, crashing of glass, trampling of feet, a Squad of Police with drawn revolvers, led by a grizzled, brutal-faced CAPTAIN, run into the room. They are followed by MARGARET, still distractedly clutching the pieces of the plan to her breast*]

Captain [*pointing to the mask of DION—triumphantly*]. Got him! He's dead!

[*MARGARET throws herself on her knees, takes the mask, and kisses it*]

Margaret [*heart-brokenly*]. Dion! Dion! [*Her face hidden in her arms, the mask in her hands above her bowed head, she remains, sobbing with deep, silent grief*]

Captain [*noticing CYBEL and BROWN—*

startled]. Hey! Look at this! What're you doin' here? Who's he?

Cybel. You ought to know. You croaked him!

Captain [with a defensive snarl—hastily]. It was Anthony! I saw his mug! This feller's an accomplice, I bet yuh! Serves him right! Who is he? Friend o' yours! Crook! What's his name? Tell me or I'll fix yuh!

Cybel. Billy.

Captain. Billy what?

Cybel. I don't know. He's dying. [Sud-denly] Leave me alone with him, and maybe I'll get him to squeal it.

Captain. Yuh better! I got to have a clean report. I'll give yuh a couple o' minutes.

[*He motions to the Policemen, who follow him out. CYBEL takes off her mask and sits down by BROWN's head. He makes an effort to raise himself toward her, and she helps him, throwing her kimono over his bare body, drawing his head on to her shoulder.*]

Brown [snuggling against her—gratefully].

The earth is warm.

Cybel [soothingly, looking before her like an idol]. Ssshh! Go to sleep, Billy.

Brown. Yes, Mother. [Explainingly] It was dark, and I couldn't see where I was going, and they all picked on me.

Cybel. I know. You're tired.

Brown. And when I wake up . . . ?

Cybel. The sun will be rising again.

Brown. To judge the living and the dead! [Frightenedly] I don't want justice. I want love.

Cybel. There is only love.

Brown. Thank you, Mother. [Feebly] I'm getting sleepy. What's the prayer you taught me? . . . Our Father . . .

Cybel [with calm exultance]. Our Father Who Art!

Brown [taking her tone—exultantly]. Who art! Who art! [Suddenly—with ecstasy] I know! I have found Him! I hear Him speak! "Blessed are they that weep, for they shall laugh!" Only he that has wept can laugh! The laughter of Heaven sows earth with a rain of tears, and out of Earth's transfigured birth-pain the laughter of Man returns to bless and play again in innumerable dancing gales of flame upon the knees of God! [*He dies*]

[*CYBEL gets up and fixes his body on the couch. She bends down and kisses*

him gently. She straightens up and looks into space, with profound pain]

Cybel. Always spring comes again bearing life! Always again! Always, always forever again!—Spring again!—life again!—summer and fall and death and peace again! [*With agonized sorrow*] But always, always, love and conception and birth and pain again—spring bearing the intolerable chalice of life again!—[*Then with agonized exultance*] bearing the glorious, blazing crown of life again! [*She stands like an idol of Earth, her eyes staring out over the world*]

Margaret [lifting her head adoringly to the mask—triumphant tenderness mingled with her grief]. My lover! My husband! My boy! [*She kisses the mask*] Good-by. Thank you for happiness! And you're not dead, sweetheart! You can never die till my heart dies! You will live forever! You will sleep under my heart! I will feel you stirring in your sleep, forever under my heart!

[*She kisses the mask again. There is a pause. The CAPTAIN comes just into sight at the left and speaks toward the front without looking at MARGARET and CYBEL*]

Captain [gruffly]. Well, what's his name?

Cybel. Man!

Captain [taking a grimy notebook and an inch-long pencil from his pocket]. How d'yuh spell it?

EPILOGUE

Four year later. The same spot on the same dock as in the Prologue on another moonlight night in June. The sound of the waves and of distant dance music is heard.

MARGARET and her THREE SONS appear from the right. The eldest is now eighteen. All are dressed in the height of correct Prep-school elegance. They are all tall, athletic, strong, and handsome-looking. They loom up around the slight figure of their mother like protecting giants, giving her a strange aspect of lonely, detached, small femininity. She wears her mask of the proud, indulgent Mother. She has grown appreciably older. Her hair is now a beautiful gray. There is about her manner and voice the sad but contented feeling of one

who knows her life-purpose well accomplished but is at the same time a bit empty and comfortless with the finality of it. She is wrapped in a gray cloak.

Eldest. Doesn't Bee look beautiful to-night, Mother?

Next. Don't you think Mabel's the best dancer in there, Mother?

Youngest. Aw, Alice has them both beat, hasn't she, Mother?

Margaret [with a sad little laugh]. Each of you is right. *[With strange finality]* Good-by, boys.

Boys [surprised]. Good-by.

Margaret. It was here on a night just like this your father first proposed to me. Did you ever know that?

Boys [embarrassedly]. No.

Margaret [yearningly]. But the nights now are so much colder than they used to be. Think of it, I went in moonlight-bathing in June when I was a girl. It was so warm and beautiful in those days. I remember the Junes when I was carrying you boys . . .

[There is a pause. They fidget uneasily.]

She asks pleadingly]

Promise me faithfully never to forget your father!

Boys [uncomfortably]. Yes, Mother.

Margaret [forcing a joking tone]. But you

mustn't waste June on an old woman like me! Go in and dance.

[They hesitate dutifully]

Go on. I really want to be alone—with my Junes.

Boys [unable to conceal their eagerness].

Yes, Mother. *[They go away]*

[MARGARET slowly removes her mask, laying it on the bench, and stares up at the moon with a wistful, resigned sweetness]

Margaret. So long ago! And yet I'm still the same Margaret. It's only our lives that grow old. We are where centuries only count as seconds and after a thousand lives our eyes begin to open—*[She looks around her with a rapt smile]* and the moon rests in the sea! I want to feel the moon at peace in the sea! I want Dion to leave the sky for me! I want him to sleep in the tides of my heart! *[She slowly takes from under her cloak, from her bosom, as if from her heart, the mask of DION as it was at the last and holds it before her face]* My lover! My husband! My boy! You can never die till my heart dies! You will live forever! You are sleeping under my heart! I feel you stirring in your sleep, forever under my heart. *[She kisses him on the lips with a timeless kiss]*

THE END

ROADSIDE

A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

By LYNN RIGGS

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CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that *Roadside*, being fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, the British Empire, including the Dominion of Canada, and all other countries of the Copyright Union, is subject to a royalty. All rights, including professional, amateur, motion pictures, recitation, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved. In its present form the play is dedicated to the reading public only. No public reading or presentation of any part or portion of this material may be given without the written permission of the agent, Samuel French, of 25 West 45th Street, New York 36, N. Y., or 7623 Sunset Blvd., Hollywood 46, Calif., or, if in Canada, of 480 University Ave., Toronto.

LYNN RIGGS AND THE FOLK PLAY

LYNN RIGGS, poet, playwright, and scenarist, was born on a farm near Claremore, Oklahoma, in 1899. Like many writers, his heritage and early experience were non-literary, but provided him with much of his future subject matter. Oil had not yet been discovered and the territory was witnessing the conflict between the cattleman and the farmer which is the theme of Mr. Riggs' early plays. As a boy he worked on his father's farm and, in the evenings, attended "play parties" where he delighted in the rich, poetic speech of his neighbors. He took pleasure, too, in their folk songs and ballads, characterized, as he says, by "their quaintness, their sadness, their robustness, their simplicity, their hearty or bawdy humors, their sentimentalities, their melodrama, their touching sweetness." Further solace came to him in the shape of "trashy fiction," and echoes of sensational and tawdry novels of violence are to be found in his work, along with stronger echoes of the folk.

After a roving youth, which included singing at the local movie, punching cows on a cattle train, clerking in a bookstore, and performing as a Hollywood extra, Mr. Riggs returned to Oklahoma and became a reporter on the *Tulsa Oil and Gas Journal*, the very title of which signals the vast change which had come over his native state. As an antidote to journalism he began writing verse, a slender volume of which was published as *The Iron Dish* (1930). He entered the University of Oklahoma, where he was encouraged to turn his talents to the stage. Here his first play, *Cuckoo*, a farce, was produced by the drama department, and he knew his vocation. A summer season as a Chautauqua entertainer gained him enough money to join the artists' colony at Santa Fe, and here he began work in earnest.

His first serious play, the one-act *Knives from Syria* establishes the theme and characteristics of his early and best work. He tells, in Oklahoma dialect, the brief story (reminiscent of Synge's *In the Shadow of the Glen*) of a young, romantic girl swept off her feet by the influence of a Syrian peddler whose shabby reality is masqued from her eyes by the atmosphere of mystery and far-off places that surrounds him. The romantic young lady is the chief character of both *Roadside* and *Green Grow the Lilacs*, in which a peddler also figures. In *Roadside*, his place has been taken by the young braggart from Texas.

Eventually, Mr. Riggs completed a full-length tragedy, *Big Lake*, produced in New York by the American Laboratory Theater, one of the fine experimental dramatic groups, in 1928. The play attracted considerable attention and won for its author a Guggenheim fellowship. He went to France, wrote the whole of *Green Grow the Lilacs*, and began *Roadside*. The latter was finished in this country at the encouragement of the producer, Arthur Hopkins, while Mr. Riggs was serving an apprenticeship as a script writer in Hollywood.

Both plays grow out of his childhood background in Indian Territory; both are part of the widespread and healthy movement of the American theater in the thirties to explore the roots of the past and the possibilities of folk drama. Where such a man as Paul Green searches the tragic nature of the negro folk, however, Lynn Riggs turns to the virile spirit of the happy-go-lucky cowpoke. If Paul Green draws inspiration and tone from the pathos of the spiritual, Lynn Riggs seems to convey the cocksureness, the braggadocio and waggery of the rodeo singer. Thematically, his work may be associated with the tall tales of the frontier, with Davy Crockett and the early works of Mark Twain.

Structurally *Roadside* has an interesting originality. Working with ballad material, the playwright has given it many of the characteristics of that unsophisticated form. Like the ballad, *Roadside* is casual about exposition, about the logic of events, or about the unities. Instead, the playwright, like the ballad singer, chooses to talk most about the parts of the story that interest him—the gusty comedy of the courtroom scene, for instance, for which the well-made play could ill spare the time. The purpose of the ballad singer is never simply to tell a story—the plot is generally familiar in advance—but to convey the emotions of a situation (recall Johnny Armstrong at the moment of his betrayal, Sir Patrick Spens and his loyalty, Edward's bitter forgiveness) to his hearers. So one might say the playwright is here interested not in the horizontal progress of his story—it is

evident from the start that Hannie and Texas are destined for each other—but in the vertical depth of his scenes. The realistic playwright could find no place for Texas' narrative of his birth in the first act. For Mr. Riggs, as for the ballad singer, the chapter of autobiography justifies its place by the pleasure it gives, as does the fooling of Red Ike and Black Ike. The structure of *Roadside* grows out of its material; it is lanky, casual, and rich in speech and feeling, like its characters. Like them it is earthy, and elemental, and its humor not infrequently springs from subjects which the more sophisticated either have exhausted or choose to treat ambiguously. It is a complete expression of Mr. Riggs' creed, that you are of the soil which nourished you, and its virtues are your virtues. And its theme, the conflict between the farmer and the cow hand, the settler and the vagabond, organized society and the individual, is part of "the life of poetry" in which everyman can see himself.

Mr. Riggs has written other plays, most notably *Russet Mantle* in 1936 and *The Cream in the Well*, 1941, but his attempts to free himself from folk material, and possibly his continuing work as a Hollywood scenarist, have led to a loss of the vitality and the freshness, and the genuine poetry of his early plays. *Green Grow the Lilacs* was made into the sensationally successful musical comedy *Oklahoma!* by Rogers and Hammerstein in 1943.

Roadside was produced in New York by Arthur Hopkins in 1930. Ralph Bellamy played the role of Texas; Ruthelma Stevens, Hannie; and Frederick Burton, Pap Rader.

CHARACTERS

PAP RADER
BUZZEY HALE
HANNIE RADER
RED IKE
BLACK IKE
TEXAS
TOWN MARSHAL
NEB
JUDGE SNODGRASS
MRS. FOSTER

ACT I—*By the side of a road through the woods in Indian Territory.*

Sunset of a June day in 1905

ACT II—SCENE 1. *The same. Dawn, the next morning*

SCENE 2. *A courtroom in Verdigrée Switch. Two hours later*

ACT III—*The roadside again. An hour or so later*

ROADSIDE

ACT ONE

By the side of a road through the woods in Indian Territory, the year 1905. The back end of a covered wagon, with boxes for stepping down out of it, can be seen at left. The road, coming in at the back from deep in the woods, has been widened here by hundreds of campers; charred logs, ashes, last year's leaves,—litter the roadside. A large, black, three-legged pot, with a fire under it, stands at the right. Some old camp chairs, a battered stool or two, dishes, tin pans, etc. It is near sundown of a day in June, and the air is summery and sweet.

BZZEY HALE, a little, bluish, dried-up farmer, is sitting disconsolately by the fire. PAP RADER, a tall, wiry, good-natured old man, with dirty, falling-apart clothes, comes from around the wagon.

Pap [snorting]. Set there a-pinin'. Damned if you doan look like a ole turkey buzzard! No wonder Hannie called you Buzzzey.

Buzzzey [shortly]. That ain't it. Buzzzey is short—fer beautiful.

Pap. Beautiful! Hunh! If you're beautiful, I'm a bob-tailed witch! Looky here, I doan see whut you make outa follerin' us around anyway, Mister Turkey Buzzard. They ain't nuthin' dead around here fer you to chaw on. Clappin' yer wings! And damned if that sorry face of yourn ain't blue, too, same as a buzzard! After you've et, things must be a sight. I ain't wantin' you around.

Buzzzey. I'm gonna be around, though.

Pap. Yeow, you'll be.

Buzzzey [with asperity]. If it hadn't a-been fer you, Hannie wouldn't a-left me in the first place. You done it with yer damned ole covered wagon. Tellin' her about the roads again. Remindin' her of when she was a girl ridin' hell-bent from Arkansas to Panhandle alongside you an' yer ole womern. You brung her up, I'll say you brung her up, with her ways! Wonder I ever married her a-tall an' her with a ole man like you couldn't read a sign

on a hitch-post. Whut'd you think about? Ridin' on the road, that's all you think about. From here to Texas, and back to Wyoming and all over the cattle roads, and little shike-poke¹ towns from here to Missouri. Stealin' chickens and roas'n'ears and sich, to keep you alive. [In disgust] The road! That's all you think about!

Pap. Whut you think about is plowin'.

Buzzzey. Yeow, and makin' hay and plantin' corn and oats and feedin' cattle and shoats—livin' outa the ground, is whut I think about. I'd like to know whut's better?

Pap. This here's better. An' I'm tellin' you Hannie'd orter divorced you like she did. You ain't no kind of a man, and yore life ain't no kind of a life fer Hannie to be havin'. She's a strappin' girl that wants to roam, like me, and see life 'stid of a milk churn.

Buzzzey. I'll git her back, you'll see. If I have to foller you up Salt Crick.

Pap [chuckling]. If you foller us too long, yer crops'll all be ruind. Here it is June an' I'll bet yer hay ain't even first cut.

Buzzzey. It's cut, Pap Rader. I got money to h'ar me h'ard hands.

Pap. And while you ain't there how hard you reckon they work? [Chortling] I used to be a h'ard hand myself. When ole man Hardgraves was away we'd set down and not git up till his buggy wheels rattled the pike comin' home from Joplin.

Buzzzey. When I h'ar men, I h'ar men. Red Ike and Black Ike Brazier—that's the kinda men I h'ar. I've knowed 'em from boys up. Ever since Hannie married me, Red Ike and Black Ike has worked on my farm same as if it uz them, and ud git the last drop of growin' out of it.

Pap. Well, I hope yer right. 'Cause if you ain't, you'll git sick and turn bluer'n you be a'ready.

Buzzzey. I'm right, Pap Rader.

Pap. Ain't nobody right fer too long at a time, I noticed.

¹ A mythical bird whose activities are embarrassing to everyone.

Hannie's Voice [from inside the wagon].
Pap!

Pap. Whut is it?

Hannie [excitedly]. Pap, come 'ere!

Pap. Come 'ere, yerself. I'm busy. *[To Buzzey]* If you doan git sense enough to stop follerin' us from county to county the way you been doin' fer a week, you'll sleep here on the cold ground till you die of the shakin' aygers.

Hannie [from the wagon]. God damn it, Pap! You heared me, you tarnation ole fool! Come a-runnin'! Cain't you hear nuthin'?

Pap. Well, whut is it? Come out here and tell it.

Hannie [sticking her head out]. I ain't got so many clothes on. And I don't expect to come out and give that ole buzzard no free show. He's crazy enough fer a womern 'thout seein' one naked. Case you'd like to know it, that hound of yourn is eatin' up yer hog shoulder.

Pap [flying around the wagon and out of sight]. Well, why in blazes didden you say so!

Hannie. I said so.

[She withdraws her head. A hound lets out a dismal wail and a series of short yelps]

Buzzey [going up to the wagon]. Whur'd yer Pap git a hog shoulder, Hannie? Guess he bought it—

Hannie [putting her head out again]. Bought it, huh? Stole it offen the slaughter house at Claremore.

Buzzey. I knowed it.

Hannie. You're so smart.

[She withdraws]

Pap [coming around the wagon]. I saved that dog from drownin' and this is the way he does me. A good hog shoulder plumb ruint. *[He holds up a mutilated hog shoulder]* Here, might as well have it all now you've ruint it, you yeller cur. *[He throws the shoulder back to the dog]* I'm goin' down along the crick bank and see whut I c'n see.

Buzzey [nastily]. Watermelons ain't ripe yit, Pap.

Pap. Who said watermelons?

Buzzey. Roas'n'ears'll be ripe in July, though.

Pap. I'm gonna git a mite of hay fer the horses. Stir that stew if you're gonna stick around here. You'll be wantin' some in yer

measly gullet afore long. *[He starts out. Turning back]* Looky here, you let Hannie alone. She ain't gonna marry you again. And she ain't gonna have no truck with you's long's I'm around, you hear me?

Buzzey. I hear you.

Pap. You better heed me.

[He goes out]

[BUZZEY stirs the stew, tastes it, and is about to pour some in a bowl when he hears singing down the road. He puts the bowl down hastily, wrinkles his forehead, trying to make out something. HANNIE comes out of the wagon and down the steps. She is a buxom, well-made girl about twenty, with black snapping eyes and a rich, vulgar, earthy humor. She crosses over past the fire]

Buzzey. Hannie. *[She stops]* Hannie, you ain't runnin' away from me, air you?

Hannie. I doan know you from Adam.

Buzzey. Don't you do me this a-way, Hannie.

Hannie. What a-way?

Buzzey. Not havin' no words with me, even.

Hannie. Why're you follerin' us all the way from Vinita, me and Pap?

Buzzey. I can't he'p it. Cain't you come back to me?

Hannie. Not to you ner no one like you. I want me a man, not a broomstick. Besides, I had enough of bein' a farmer's wife.

Buzzey. It was 'cause you'd been s' sharp to me, I done whut I done. You wouldn't a-got no divorce from me if someone hadden fixed it up fer me to be found the way I was.

Hannie. Oh, woulden I? Sich a womern the Ikes found you with, too! From all account. You musta been in a bad way. Who fixed it then?

Buzzey. I ain't sayin'.

Hannie. Well, whoever fixed it, you fixed yourself with me.

Buzzey. Hannie, it won't never happen again.

Hannie. It can happen till you're blue in the face, fer all I keer. Whut I can't figger out is how I ever come to marry you in the first place.

Buzzey. It was love, that's whut it was.

Hannie. Love? Lemme look at you.

Buzzey. Well, look at me, and you'll see.

Hannie [looking him over]. Is that a new suit you got on?

Buzzey. Brand spankin'!

Hannie. It don't seem to improve you none. Well, now le's see. You shore I was married to you?

Buzzey. You know blame well you was!

Hannie. I reckon you're right. All I c'n recollect was once about two year ago it was Spring, and Pap and me stopped by that little branch that run th'ough yore cow pasture. And you come down to set the dogs on us. When you seen me—you didn't. So I fell in a daze er sump'n—and when I come to, it seemed like I was kinda married to you— All on account of it bein' Spring, and you not settin' the dogs on us—and one other thing. I was all set to marry *someone* along about then—and I never thought to be picky and choosy.

Buzzey [huffily]. You coulda done worse. I had me plenty of land and a way to take keer of you, didn't I?

Hannie. Yeah. But that don't mean a thing to me. I could take keer of myself the day I was borned. Yep, I believe I could! Anyway, I can now. And if I ever marry again, it'll have to be to a world-slingin', star-traipsin' son of a gun that's more my match than you air. And when I do run onto sich a feller, I miss my guess if cracks of lightnin' don't burn up the country fer fourteen miles around. So look out you don't git scorched.

[She starts out]

Buzzey. Hannie, come on back! The—the ca'ves even doan know me. And old Roan kicks at me ever time I go in the barn. They won't have nuthin' to do with me. They're missin' you, I reckon.

Hannie. Well, I been missed by ca'ves and horses afore. But I never heard of no dumb animals dyin' of a broke heart. Quit a-botherin' me now.

Buzzey. Aw, Hannie, lemme go with you. Air you goin' to pick up sticks?

Hannie. No, I ain't.

Buzzey. Er find wild ingerns? I'll help you do whutever you're a-goin' fer. Guess I'll foller you.

Hannie. Guess you won't, Mister Buzzey Hale. [Roguishly] I ain't gonna do nuthin' you c'n he'p me do.

[She goes out]

[The song down the road comes nearer.

Buzzey listens, uncertain and worried.

Then he straightens up decisively and is a rod of hot anger, when RED IKE and BLACK IKE BRAZIER burst into sight through the trees along the road. They have on straw hats, overalls, dirty blue shirts, heavy brogans, and are leaning on each other's shoulders, singing loudly: "They chew tobaccer thin in Kansas!" BLACK IKE's hair is coal black, RED's a flaming red. They are stupid and elfin at the same time. Seeing BUZZEY, they stop short, and make a sudden instinctive move to run away, which they quickly suppress]

Buzzey. Well, by God, it's you, is it!

Red Ike [swallowing hard]. Yeow, it's us.

Black Ike. Red Ike and Black Ike—both of us.

[They begin singing again, and sing right through BUZZEY's angry speech] The Ikes [singing].

They chew tobaccer thin in Kansas,

They chew tobaccer thin in Kansas,

They chew tobaccer thin and they spit it on their chin,

And they lick it in again in Kansas.

The people don't wed in Kansas,

The people don't wed in Kansas,

The people don't wed—er so I've heared it said,

They jist go to bed in Kansas.

They cook in a pot in Kansas,

They cook in a pot in Kansas,

They cook in a pot, and they eat it while it's hot,

And they git the Guess What in Kansas.

Buzzey [furiously]. Red Ike and Black Ike, hell! Of all the sorry, mangy— Whut in hell're you doin' here anyhow? Whut'd you mean flyin' off leavin' my farm to run itself? How long you been gone? You're two days away now! I'll bet the hogs've died fer slop! I'll bet the hay's burnt up in the field! I'll bet the corn's jist bakin' in the row—

Red Ike. Is this yore campin' outfit?

Buzzey [outraged]. Campin'!

Black Ike. You a campin' man now, Mr. Hale? We didden know whur you'd went at.

Red Ike. You got some soup?

Buzzey. Soup!

Black Ike. We're powerful hongry. Ain't et in a day.

Red Ike. Been a-singin' to keep up our sperrits.

Buzzey. Singin'!

Black Ike. Et some strawberries, though.

Buzzey [violently]. I don't keer if you starve! Whut'd you leave my farm fur! Thought I could trust it to you.

Black Ike. Mister Hale, we never thunk to a-run onto you, I swear to my time. We didden know whur you was, not showin' up. Thought mebbe you drowned in the bot-tom some'ers.

Red Ike. We was a-lookin' fer someone else.

Black Ike. Is this the—? [*He is looking over past the wagon*] By gum it is!

Red Ike. It's the wagon!

Buzzey. You git back quick's you c'n hotfoot it, both of you. I'd orter thrash you 'thin a inch of yer lives! *Git*, I tell you!

Red Ike. We're gonna stay.

[*He sits down, cross-legged*]

Black Ike [following suit]. We're gonna set here and stay, ain't we, Red?

Buzzey. You're f'ard, both of you!

Red Ike. Suits me. Cain't make me mad.

Buzzey. I'd orter f'ar you.

Black Ike. We're a 'ready done f'ard.

Buzzey. No, you ain't! You agreed to he'p me git the hay in and stay th'ough the thrashin'.

Red Ike. We'll he'p you.

Buzzey [helplessly]. Well, don't set there. Git back like I told you.

Red Ike. We jist come.

Buzzey. Look here. I'd orten't to do this—you're both so onnery—but I'll give you five dollars.

Red Ike. Le's see it.

[*Buzzey hands him a bill*]

Black Ike. Le's see another'n.

[*Buzzey hands over another*]

[*RED IKE and BLACK IKE look at each other, then hand the bills back*]

Red Ike. Don't hurry us.

Buzzey. You better take it. Why, you're damn fools! It'll buy you near ten plugs of Horseshoe.

Black Ike [spitting]. 'Druther chew Star Navy.

Buzzey. Well, Star Navy.

Black Ike [irrelevantly]. Chew Star Navy and spit ham gravy.

Buzzey. Look here, if I give you ten dollars apiece—no, I won't give you ten dollars.

Red Ike. Wouldeen take it.

Buzzey [suspiciously]. How much you tryin' to bleed outa me?

Red Ike. Not any.

Buzzey. Whut'd you come fer, anyway?

Red Ike [evasively]. Oh,—jist seen the purty road and started off a-follerin' it.

Black Ike. You can't keep no colt in the pasture when it's Summer. We was puttin' up the mules and I says to Red, "Red," I says, "How about it?" And Red says, "How about it yerself?" So up we got and away we went till we come to Verdigrée Switch. There, they was a great to-do of a man shootin' his way into jail, so we hurry up and here we be.

Buzzey. You got sump'n up yer sleeve.

Red Ike. Why, Mr. Hale, no. No, we ain't! Mebbe you're right, though. Mebbe we have got sump'n up our sleeves. [*Breaking off, excitedly*] Oh!

[*He scrambles to his feet*]

Black Ike [doing likewise]. It's her!

Red Ike. She's a-comin'!

Black Ike. She's here!

Hannie [coming in, ecstatically]. Hello! Howdy! Red Ike and Black Ike! Thought I heared yer voices!

Red Ike. Thought we'd find you!—

Black Ike. Knowed we'd find you!—

Red Ike. —'f we looked long enough—

Black Ike. —'n in the right place—

Red Ike. —'n on the right road.

Hannie. If I ain't missed you!—

Red Ike. We missed you. Whutta you mean runnin' off?—

Black Ike. Flyin' the coop, kickin' over the trace chains? Come on back, what you say?

Red Ike. 'Spect us to work 'thout you around?

Black Ike. Marry the ole buzzard again.

Red Ike. Put up with him.

Hannie. Quit it! I'm s' glad to see you, I'll be promisin' to, in a minute!

Buzzey. Hannie! Go on, promise! I'll be good to you if you come back—and marry me again. Git you a carpet sweeper.

Black Ike. Go on, promise! Think of me and Red. Not hardly able to do no work 'thout you around.

Red Ike. Think of me and Black. In the field honin' fer you.

Buzzey. Think of *me*, why don't you, Hannie?

Hannie. Now, now! Quit it! I'm gonna think of myself a while. Here, set down and eat some stew.

Buzzey [hopefully]. You ain't said you wouldn't come back.

Hannie. And I ain't said I would.

[*She gives them all stew. They sit down and eat*]

Black Ike. We're shore hongry.

Red Ike. Ain't et in a day.

Hannie [happily]. 'S jist like ole times. Me and Buzzey and you Ikes settin' around. If I ain't missed you! You Ikes is purt' near as crazy as me. Well, not quite, but purt' near. Whut you have to do 'th a farm is sump'n I can't make out, though.

Red Ike. If you like it, *we* like it. Ain't that so, Black?

[BLACK nods agreement]

Hannie. I did like yer ole farm some, Buzzey—

Buzzey [delighted]. It's jist like it always was, Hannie. There a-waitin'—

Hannie. Mostly on account of the Ikes bein' on it. And another thing. I like to hotfoot it all over creation—and that's a fact. But ever once in a while I git so homesick I'd purt' nigh kick Paw in the pants and hotfoot it back. I wanta set quiet once in a while and drink milk out of a cold well.

Buzzey. We got milk, Hannie. Ever since ole Reddy come in with her calf—

Hannie. But Paw's sich a goer. Has to cross that next crick, or make the next aidge of town 'fore sundown. Him and me don't hit it off complete. Listen to me, I'm gonna tell you sump'n. Men is s' crazy. Some wants to set on a farm till they dry up and blow away—like Buzzey here. Or some wants to go streakin' across the country, hell-bent fer high water—like Paw. If they was jist a half-way crazy man who liked to streak, and liked to set—*both*. A nonsensical strappin' man who had a good time settin' or streakin'—but who had a *good time*— [*She breaks off*] Now tell me things.

Black Ike. Whut about?

Hannie. Oh, anything. The way you used to.

Black Ike [to Red]. 'Bout the ghostes?

Red Ike. On Mabel Gardner's bed-post?

Hannie. I heard that.

Black Ike. I know! The man in the sack.

Red Ike. Chinaman!

Black Ike. Sewed in a gunny-sack.

Red Ike. Mad as a steer!

Black Ike. Hung up to the ceiling!

Red Ike. Ramped and teared and snorted!

Hannie. I heard that, too.

Black Ike [disappointed]. Oh! She's heard that. [*Reviving*] Oh, I know! We'll tell her about Texas! Wanta hear about Texas?

Hannie. Whut about Texas?

Black Ike. Well, we seen sich a sight, didden we, Red?

Red Ike. Down at the Switch as we come th'ough.

Black Ike. A man th'owed in the jail fer gettin' drunk.

Red Ike. He got drunk and crazy and wild. And he yelled. My, how he yelled!

Black Ike. Whut was it he yelled! "Borned in Texas—" How'd it go?

Red Ike [loudly].

Wild and reckless,
Borned in Texas,
Suckled by a bear,
Steel backbone,
Tail screwed on,
Twelve feet long,
Dare any son-of-a-bitch
to step on it!

Hannie. Purty good!

Buzzey [disgusted]. Purty good!

Red Ike. Nen the marshal got a-holt of of him, and the jedge said: "Twelve days in jail, one fer ever foot of yer long tail." So they went to th'ow him in jail and he kicked the jedge offen the bench and made jist plum hash outa the courtroom first 'fore they got him in the calaboose.

Hannie [rapturously]. Good!

Buzzey [disgusted]. Good!

Red Ike. My, a big, hulky, curly-headed, han'some ring-tail-tooter, wuzn't he, Black?

Hannie. And whur is he?

Red Ike. Sh! Down the road a piece.

Hannie. Outa jail?

Black Ike. Shore. Me'n Red seen him, 's we come along. Like to scairt us to death, too. Come up on us, and said, "I broke outa jail, and if you tell on me, I'll break yer head." My, we wouldn't tell on him, would we, Red?

Hannie [*thoughtfully*]. Down the road there?

Black Ike [*pointing back*]. That road right there.

Buzzey. You ain't interested in a man like that, air you, Hannie? A man 'at breaks laws, and don't have no home, and goes shootin' around—

Hannie [*cryptically*]. Shet up about it. I hate a man like that.

Buzzey. That's whut I thought. Here comes yer pap.

[PAP RADAR comes in with an armful of hay for the horses. He drops it in astonishment]

Pap Rader. Red Ike and Black Ike [*Gleefully*] I knowed it, I knowed it! [*To Buzzey*] Whut'd I tell you about h'ard hands!—Hee! Hee! Knowed they wouldn't work 'thout you around!

Voice [*off back*]. Wild and reckless. Borne in Texas!—

Hannie [*rushing over to PAP*]. Hey, Pap, they's a man comin' along the road! [*In an excited rush, thumping PAP on the chest at every sentence*] Wild and reckless, borne in Texas! A tail twelve feet long! He fit his way into jail and outa jail, and he's comin' along that road there, and heavens and earth, whut're you gonna do!

Voice [*off back*]. Steel backbone, tail screwed on—

Hannie. Hear that! It's him! I'm gonna run in the wagon, quick!

Pap. Why, Hannie! Nuthin' won't hurt you. We're here.

Buzzey [*coming over*]. Don't you be a-feard, little womern. I'll pertect you.

Hannie. Pertect me? [*She laughs uproariously*] Pertect a doodle-bug! I'm gonna go in the wagon—

Buzzey. Whut you goin' in the wagon fer, Hannie?

Hannie. I'm gonna put flour on my face and purty myself up, that's whut fer.

[*She goes up into the wagon*]

[*The two men stare after her, uncomprehendingly*]

Buzzey [*puzzled*]. Now whut on earth's come over her?

Pap. Damned if I know. Whut's this about a man?

Buzzey. Why, Red and Black says this is a wild crazy handsome man, that beat up the jedge and smashed up the courtroom and broke outa jail down here in Verdigrée

and says he was borne in Texas, and he's comin' along the road and—

Pap. Borne in whur?

Buzzey. Texas. My, I cain't make out whut that womern is up to!

Pap [*with an amused chuckle*]. No one cain't make out whut Hannie is up to. I reckon I'll have some of that there stew 'fore it's all gone.

[*He crosses over to the pot and is helping himself, when a tall, rangy, slightly-drunk man in rough clothes and without a hat, comes into sight. An empty pistol holster hangs at his belt. The sun has set by this time, and it begins to grow dark. The man stops short, seeing the four men*]

Man. Now, who in hell—? [*Uncertainly*] Howdy—

Pap. Howdy yerself, Mister.

Man [*with relief*]. Thought you might be the marshal. Shore don't want to see that marshal again! It wouldn't be safe—fer him. [*Seeing the Ikes*] Hello, if here ain't the two little twins I seen down the road a piece—

Red Ike. We ain't twins.

Black Ike. We're cousins.

Man. Cousins? You look like twins to me.

Red Ike [*disarmingly*]. Have it yer own way, Mister. Ain't no harm in bein' twins, if you say so.

Man [*generously*]. I'll tell you, though, I'd jist as soon you'd be cousins as twins. I don't wanta argy about it.

Red Ike. Suit yerself, Mister Texas.

Texas. How'd you know my name's Texas?

Red Ike. Oh, we know all about you!

Black Ike. Wild and reckless, borne in Texas!

Texas. That don't make my name Texas.

Black Ike. Oh, we know yer name ain't Texas.

Texas. You do?

Black Ike. We jist called you that.

Texas. Well, jist the same—my name's Texas.

Red Ike. It is?

Texas. You don't think it ud be Arkansas, do you?

Red Ike. I tell you, Mister, Texas is as good a name as any.

Black Ike. Better'n any!

Red Ike. Jist about.

Black Ike. It plumb is!

Texas [indicating PAP]. Is this here yer Paw?

Red Ike. It's Pap Rader. He ain't *our* pap, though.

Black Ike. Not as we know of.

Texas. Howd' do, Mr. Rader.

Pap [cordially]. We been hearin' about you, Mr. Texas. Hear you beat up the jedge, and broke outa jail, and raised hell and high water complete, down here in Verdree.

Texas [modestly]. Oh, it wasn't so much.

Pap. Sounded purty good to me.

Texas. Well, I—I was jist feelin' a little good.

Pap. It don't do to be so bashful about it. Have some stew?

Texas. Don't mind if I do. They don't seem to have no short order counter in the Verdree calaboose.

[PAP gives him stew. He sits down and begins to eat]

Pap. They ort to put one in.

Texas [hopefully]. Mebbe they will some day, when they git to realizin'.

Pap. I shore hope so.

Texas. They won't be able to git no one in their old jail, they don't do sump'n'.

Pap. This here is Mr. Hale.

Texas. Howd' do, Mr. Hale.

Buzzey [sullenly]. Howdy.

Texas [politely]. You look porely.

Buzzey [huffily]. I don't know.

Texas. I tell you, you look like a man hadn't had his fill of sump'n—I cain't make out whut.

Red Ike [brightly]. Guessed it that time, Mr. Texas! His wife jist divorced him.

Texas. Oh!

Buzzey [furiously]. Shet up yer mouth, Red Ike, I'll knock you down! [He stamps off into the woods muttering] Folks a-buttin' into business that don't concern 'em—

Texas. He kinda takes it to heart, don't he?

[He looks after him]

Pap. Well, it tain't no joke to lose a womern.

Texas [sympathetically]. No, that's right.

Pap. 'Specially one as strappin' and full of the devil as the one *he* lost.

Texas. Well, she musta been blind she married a man like that.

Pap. Well, she hadn't saw many men when she married Buzzey.

Texas. I reckon not! [Judicially] A womern ort to marry her a man that ud show her a good time.

Pap. Yep, that's whut I think.

Texas. If this here womern's so strappin' and full of the ole devil like you say, someone shore ort to kick her paw in the pants fer lettin' her marry a man like that un.

Pap. You know, Mr. Texas, that's whut I been a-thinkin'.

Texas. And if I ever meet up with him, I'm gonna do some heavy bootin' myself—right whur he sets down—

The Ikes. Hee, hee!

[They shake with mirth]

Texas. Whut're you hee-heein' about?

Pap. Go and git some wood, 'fore I smack you one. Both of you!

Red Ike. Hee, hee, hee! You got wood, Mr. Rader!

Black Ike. Pine and hickory both! Scads of it! Hee, hee, hee, oh my-o!

Pap [advancing on him]. The liver of a rattlesnake! [The IKES scramble out of reach] Git some buckets there under the wagon and bring some warter from the crick. Git a move on! [The IKES go out obediently, snickering] Have to excuse them little shavers. [He taps his head] Not bad—not quite wrong, but not quite right. You never know whut they're a-gonna do next. [He looks into the pot] Guess we've et up all the stew, so I'll jist warsh out the pot, agin they fetch me that warter.

[He pours a small bucket of water in it, rinses it around, and pours it out]

Texas [helpfully]. Look out, you don't burn yerself.

[He rolls and lights a cigarette]

Pap. I been burned by better pots'n this'n.

Texas. You always traveled around like this?

Pap. Ever since my old womern died—and before that. Why, I've saw this country when you couldn't git th'ough it, it was so tangled up in br'ars.

Texas [thoughtfully]. They's things worse'n br'ars.

Pap. Whutta you mean?

Texas. Well, I tell you, pardner, it used to be a feller could go 'round and about, and enjoy hisself. Now it looks like somebody's tuck it into his head to put up a lot

of rules and regulations a feller cain't make head ner tail of, and *cain't even remember*. Why, they jist put me in jail fer gettin' drunk and yellin'— You'd think it was a sin to use yer voice out loud!

Pap [*sympathetically*]. I know jist the way you feel. Now, take me—they's plenty to eat in this yere country, berries and roas'-n'ears and rabbits—and it looks like they call it stealin' to fill yer belly.

Texas. Yep, I hate rules, and I hate fences. I tell you, Mr. Rader, we orten't to stand for either one of 'em.

Pap. You feel that-a-way, too?

Texas. Crimineee, yes! I don't wanta bother no one. And I don't want no one a-botherin' me.

Pap [*putting out his hand*]. - Shake, pardner. We'll git along.

[HANNIE, *primped and powdered extravagantly, comes down the steps of the wagon*]

Hannie. Who's that you're a-shakin' hands with, Pap? [*Her eyes sparkle with good-humor*] I cain't make out nuthin' but a smudge and a pair of legs.

Texas [*grinning*]. This here smudge is me, lady. And the legs, too—I reckon they're mine.

Hannie. Well, I seen worse.

Pap. Make you acquainted to my daughter Hannie, Mr. Texas.

Texas. Howd' do?

Hannie. Mr. Texas? Thought that was a state.

Texas [*largely*]. Oh, Texas is named after me.

Hannie. Oh!

Texas. And I'm a kind of a state *myself*, in a way of talkin'.

Hannie. State of Smart-Alec, I'd call it.

Texas. Looky here, Miss Hannie, I've spanked women like you.

Hannie. You ain't even *saw* a womern like me, let alone spanked one.

Texas [*baffled*]. You got a kind of a jokin' daughter, ain't you, Mr. Rader?

Pap [*chuckling*]. Blamed 'f I know when she is or when she *ain't*!

Hannie. When you've saw as many funny lookin' sights as I have, you'll turn to jokin', too, Mr. Texas—

Texas [*ruffled*]. To hell with you!

Hannie [*blandly*]. It eases yer mind quite a bit.

Texas. Air you meanin' me, *personal*, as funny-lookin'?

Hannie. Why, I wouldn't tromp on yer toes by meanin' anything like that! Not right off, jist after meetin' you, anyhow.

Texas [*grinning, uncertainly*]. I think I'd sorta like you, 'f I could jist make out whut you was up to.

Hannie [*sweetly*]. Ain't that nice of you, though? Well, that's easy. I heard about you from the lkes. And when I heard a loud shoutin' voice down the road a piece, I run in the wagon, and purtied myself up 'fore you got here—

Texas [*delighted*]. You did?

Hannie. Put on a clean dress, and put most a pint of flour on my face, to make me look nice.

Texas [*with huge delight*]. My goodness!

Hannie. And smellamagoody pe'fume! A half a bottle. Smell me.

Texas. Shore smell fine!

Hannie [*wickedly*]. But now 'at you're here, and I've been made acquainted to you, I'm a good mind to change my dress again, and scrub my face 'th soap-suds and lye.

Texas [*flabbergasted*]. Aw!

Hannie. Er even jist put on my nightgown, go right to bed, and sleep like a log, a-floatin' down the river.

Texas. I'll spank you yit, Miss Smarty!

Hannie. Ketchin' 'fore hangin', Mr. Texas! [*She sits down in the circle of fire-light*] Whur was you bound fer, Mr. Texas?

Texas [*scratching his head*]. Well,—I—I had aimed to make it up to Claremore 'fore it got night. [*Retaliating*] They's a womern up there who would be right glad to see me. A red-headed one.

Hannie. Is that so? Well, I guess the law down here at Verdigrée kinda helt you up a bit, didn't it?

Texas. Yeah, I guess it did.

Hannie. And it's too bad to let that womern jist cry all night. Is they anything a-hinderin' you now?

Texas. If you was as smart 'th yer eyes as you air 'th yer tongue, you'd see it's comin' night on me.

Hannie. And if you was as smart 'th yer tongue as you air 'th yer eyes, you'd ast 'f you could stay here all night and sleep by the far—so the varmints won't bother you.

Texas [*tentatively*]. I might do that.

Hannie. Less'n you're agin' bein'

crowded. Our roomin' house is fillin' up fast, from the looks of things.

Texas. Ain't it this full all the time?

Hannie. Mostly they's jist Pap and me. But tonight it looks like we're full up and runnin' over with whut you might call *men*.

Texas. How is that?

Hannie. A case of "flies to the honey," if you ast me.

Texas. You bein' the *honey*, I guess.

Hannie [*modestly*]. Well, it ain't Pap.

Texas. 'D you mean to tell me, all these yere men—?

Hannie. I don't mean to tell you nuthin'—

Texas. The Ikes? And that Buzzey, is that his name?

Hannie [*contemptuously*]. Oh, Buzzey!

Texas [*to Pap*]. Why, Mr. Rader, you told me Buzzey's womern had jist divorced him, and he was all broke up about her.

Pap. Well, if I told you, that's the way it is.

Texas [*astounded*]. Why, why— [*To HANNIE*] It's you! You're his wife!

Hannie. Was—but ain't.

Texas. My God!

Hannie [*helpfully*]. He's jist a-tryin' to git me back.

Pap [*quickly*]. Guess I'll jist mosey along and warter the horses while I'm able!

[*He goes nimbly out around the wagon, looking back, owlshly*]

Texas [*still flabbergasted*]. Now whut'd you do that fer!

Hannie. Do whut fer?

Texas. Marry Buzzey.

Hannie [*slyly*]. You hadn't come along.

Texas. Whut was the matter 'th you?

Hannie. Wasn't nuthin' the matter 'th me.

Texas. They musta been. Sump'n serious.

Hannie [*archly*]. Well, I don't see how you figger that. You see—I divorced him as soon as—as soon as I found out things. I ain't married to him *now*.

Texas. No, that's right. Course you—Looky here, you ain't aimin' to marry him again, air you?

Hannie. I ain't told him I wouldn't.

Texas. I won't allow it!

Hannie. You won't! I don't see how you c'n he'p yerself. You don't know whut a plumb fascinatin' way Buzzey's got.

Texas. I'd like to know whur he keeps it!

Hannie [*with vulgar mirth*]. Well, I hain't a-gonna tell you *that*! And besides, Mr. State of Texas, I don't think I like the way you got a-twistin' yer tongue around the man I married onct and might marry again!

Texas. If he didn't treat you right onct, he ain't apt to do it the second time. Whut'd he do, anyhow—*special*? Why'd you divorce him—you musta had to give some reason.

Hannie. Well, 'f you're interested, the Ikes come and tole me 'bout Buzzey carryin' on 'th another womern.

Texas. Well, the damn fool!

Hannie. Whut'd you mean?

Texas. Had you—and went to carryin' on 'th another womern! He musta been crazy 's a suck-egg mule!

Hannie. That's whut I thought. [*Confidentially*] Only—you see—I quit carryin' on with him myself, and I guess he thought he had to do sump'n. You know the way a man *will*. And besides, I think I'll jist tell you— [*She looks around and sees that no one is within hearing*] I fixed it up myself—the whole thing!

Texas [*astounded*]. You did!

Hannie. Well, I had the Ikes do it fer me. They found a womern some'eres—I don't know whur or who—and Buzzey done the rest.

Texas. My goodness, I mighta knowed it!

Hannie. You won't go and tell on me, though, will you?

Texas. Me? No, sir. [*Largely*] You're safe 'th me, little womern!

Hannie [*amused*]. Well, that's right big of you, I must say! Now then—how 'bout tellin' me about yerself? That red-headed womern. You might start with her.

Texas. I made her up.

Hannie. I knowed that. Jist wanted to see 'f you'd own up.

Texas. I don't think a *ordinary* man ud be safe around you! You're too damn smart! I might as well tell you about me, though so you'll *know*. I was borned in Texas, and I ain't got no present job, though I c'n do most anything I want to—*if* I want to—and I'm on my way some'eres now, I don't know whur.

Hannie. Look at them lightnin'-bugs!

Texas [ruffled]. I was tellin' you about myself.

Hannie. I c'n listen and look at the same time.

Texas. I'd consider it quite a favor if you'd look at me 'stid of lightnin'-bugs.

Hannie. I couldn't help myself, if you had a light on yore tail—like a lightnin'-bug!

Texas. Now looky here, a man cain't hit a womern that's smart-alec, so whut can he do?

Hannie. Let her have her own way, I guess. [Relenting] I wanta hear about you, though, honest I do.

Texas. Well, I've had my ups and downs, as you might have a notion of in yer noggin. I been and saw the world. Onct I run a ranch in Texas as big as the state of Alabama. I've saw them Kansas cyclones that drove a wheat-straw th'ough a live-oak tree, and I ain't never been licked by mortal man. Onct a whole crowd of mortal men—cowpunchers—tried to lick me, and they was seventy-three of 'em by count, and they all had shootin' arns.

Hannie. And whut'd you do?

Texas. Hit their heads together. And run—

Hannie. I thought you musta run.

Texas. Run after 'em! And ever one I ketched up with, I'd scalp with a ole piece of tin off a plug of Horseshoe tobaccar. Why, half of Texas to this day is full of them bald-headed cowpunchers! And furthermore—even their kids is all borned 'thout a mite of hair on their heads!

Hannie [sarcastically]. And whut else you been doin' besides scalpin' the state of Texas?

Texas. I don't think you take me serious.

Hannie. I take you serious, but I don't swaller yore kind of fishbait. Not right at first. I got to git used to it.

Texas [strangely]. Oh, you're gonna git used to it! Whut I see, I see! And I see a lot about me and you that's been wrote down some'eres fer a long time. Looky here. I wanta tell you sump'n I never told nobody—I wasn't borned.

Hannie. What!

Texas. I wasn't borned in the ordinary way. [Waggishly] I'd a-thought you'd knowed that by lookin' at me—[Lyrically] No, sir! I'm gonna tell you jist the way it was— Way out on the Texas prairie jist

this side the tall mountains set a small cabin made outa oak. And in that cabin, set a man and womern with a growed gal as purty as purty could be! Name was Liza. Mornin' come, she'd hop on her pony to ride the range, her old pap and mammy a-runnin' after her to stop her. "Come on back, Liza," they'd say—"the plains is full of coyotes. Them big old growly mountain b'ars has started to sharpen up their spring teeth." And seein' she didn't answer, they'd say, "Don't go fur, then, and come back soon." And away she'd go! Greased lightnin'! Dynamite on wings! Her pony stretched hisself out like a tentpole headed West! When she was seven mile and half away, she'd stop and look around. Now a funny thing! She had rid into a valley whur a river used to flow in the year 1. The tall grasses stood up like trees. A quair kind of a roarin' like lions come from some'eres among the tall grass. She'd git off her horse, look around, suspicious like, and go into that valley on foot. She'd stay all day. Who did she see thar? Whut did she do thar? Fer it soon was evident's the nose on yer face, she was gonna produce a infant. Who was its pappy? Whut kind of a roarin', hell-shootin', brawny big mountain of a man was she a-consortin' with? Somebody! With a whole valley fer his house, and a sky fer a roof over him! A nameless wonder of a giant with all out of doors to call his front room. A secret man that roared when he talked and shuck the ground like a earthquake rumblin'! Fin'ly one night—Liza lay in her pappy's cabin. Wild hosses come a-nickerin' and trompin' around. Great big b'ars as high as hills begin to growl sump'n fierce. All of a sudden, there was a crash and a bang and a clatter! Thunder and hail and lightnin', hell f'ar and brimstone! The cabin whur Liza lay cracked itself wide open from stem to stern, beam-end to beam-end, hind-end to gullet! And when the smoke cleared away, out I stepped, full-size, dressed to kill, in a ten-gallon hat, boots and chaps, a gun in ary hand, and both guns a-poppin'! And that's how I got started!

Hannie [carried away, in spite of herself]. I b'lieve to my soul you're tellin' the truth!

Texas. Course I'm tellin' the truth!

Hannie [recovering herself]. The truth—and whut else?

Texas. You don't think I'd lie to you—

jist after meetin' you—do you? You're the first womern I ever met up with that I felt like explainin' to jist how I come on the earth. And if it's kinda hard to swaller right at first, you shorely can believe my doin's down here at Verdigrée, cain't you?

Hannie. Well, I—

Texas. Mopped up the place slick as grease on a possum! You'd orta be proud to know me!

Hannie. I never seen a man like you in my life!

Texas. They ain't another man like me—in anybody's life!

Hannie. If you ain't a lot of talk!

Texas. Look here, they's two ways to keep outa trouble, and one of 'em is to talk. I've talked my way outa more didoes 'n you c'n shake a stick at. You don't wanta git all wropped up in scorn fer a feller's tongue a-workin'.

Hannie. I always noticed the feller that's Old Busy Tongue, when it comes right down to it, he's a coward and a skeer-cat. I bet now, if the marshal from down here at Verdigrée was to come a-sneakin' up on you now, you wouldn't know whut to do 'th yer self.

Texas. Do! First I'd put my fist right smack kudab *th'ough* him, and clean out on the other side. Nen after I'd got that done, I'd tromp on him 'th both feet, nen th'ow him in that pot of bilin' water and cook him good.

Hannie. Fiddlesticks! You wouldn't do no sich of a thing! [*Thoughtfully, puzzled*] They's sump'n funny about you, though—fer all yer talk. Sounds kinda true, even when it ain't.

Texas. It's gospel—ever word I speak!

Hannie. Can you look over a tree?

Texas [*puzzled*]. What's that got to do with it? I'm six foot tall.

Hannie [*with some relief, as if something had been answered*]. Well, that's quite a size. Whur air you a-goin' after today, Mr. Texas, if I ain't a-buttin' in?

Texas. I ain't said I was goin' anywhurs—*yit*. It all depends.

Hannie. Depends on whut?

Texas [*casually*]. Oh, on which a-way the wind blows.

Hannie [*casual herself*]. Well, it 'pears to me the wind has died down complete.

Texas. I been a-noticin' that. Trees ain't

hardly a-movin'. I'd shore hate to exert myself more'n a tree.

Hannie [*rising*]. Well, you c'n sleep here by the far 'th the rest of 'em, less'n you're afeared they'll bite.

Texas. Oh, when it comes to *bitin'*—

Hannie. And see how you like our com-p'ny.

Texas. I could tell you a lot about that right now.

Hannie. You better save it. Here comes the Ikes with warter.

[*The IKES come in with buckets and start pouring water in the pot. PAP comes in and pokes up the fire, putting more wood on it, so that it burns brightly*]

I'm a-goin' to bed. [*She goes toward the wagon*] Good night, everybody.

All. Good night.

Hannie [*roguishly*]. Tell Buzzzey "Good night" fer me, somebody. And tell him I said he could sleep right bang up clost to the hot far—and *imagine*!

[*She goes up into the wagon*]

Pap. Well, it's bed time fer all, I reckon. We go to bed 'th the chickens. Gonna stick around, Mr. Texas?

Texas. 'F you got a bed fer me.

Pap. Well, they's a half a bushel of oak leaves right under yer feet.

Texas. Them'll do fine.

[*He starts raking them up into a pile. BUZZZEY comes in. They all begin to lie down around the fire. PAP goes to sleep almost immediately*]

Texas [*raising on his elbow—to the IKES*]. Say, you, Red and Black, 'd you ever sleep in a tree?

Red Ike. Black here was borned and raised in a tree. Had a long tail, they tell me, and used to swing from one limb to another.

Black Ike [*grinning foolishly*]. Did not!

Texas. How do you sleep at night? Like a log?

Red Ike. Not us! Cain't hardly sleep none a-tall, Mr. Texas. The least little ole sound—!

Texas. Thats fine. Me—I sleep like a log. Why, I got fifty cents on me, and I kinda wondered f' you wouldn't do me a favor?

Black Ike. Shore, we would, wouldn't we, Red? [*Eagerly*] Anything you say, Mr. Texas.

Texas. Here. [*He tosses it over*] 'D you reckon you c'd sleep down the road a piece jist yond' side of that bend? I'm kinda 'spectin' someone to come along—and I'd be much obliged 'f you'd skin up the road quicker'n lightnin' and tell me 'fore he gits here—that is, if he *does* take a notion to come this a-way. I don't want to hurt him—and that's the God's truth.

Red Ike [*grinning*]. Reckon we know who it'll be, don't we, Black?

Black Ike. 'F he comes along we'll be yere 'fore you c'n say "Jack Robison," won't we, Red?

Red Ike. 'Fore you c'n say "Jack," Mr. Texas!

[*They go out down the road*]

Buzzey [*who has been listening*]. 'Spectin' someone, 'd you say, Mr. Texas?

Texas. Oh, you never can tell.

Buzzey. I offered them little fools five dollars apiece to git back to my farm, and they wouldn't take it. And here they go and gobble yore fifty cents like they hadn't saw a nickel since the flood rolled away.

Texas [*lazily*]. Funny, ain't it, the way you take to some people. And some people you can't set down in eighty feet of.

Buzzey. 'D I hear you say you didn't sleep so good?

Texas. Me? No, sir! When my mind ain't a-worryin' 'bout nuthin', I sleep like a dead man.

Buzzey [*with studied casualness*]. And how is yer mind now, Mr. Texas?

Texas [*smiling*]. They ain't nuthin' on it, a-tall, Mr. Hale, nuthin' a-tall. I'm as easy in my mind as a new-born bronc! And sich a deep dark hole of sleepin' as I'm goin' into will be wrote down in books! I bet I don't wake up till the sun does. And I bet I dream!

Buzzey [*grimly*]. Yeah, I reckon you will.

[*Silence. Darkness creeps in among the trees and blots out everything but the burning fire. A night owl hoots eerily; a frog by the creek bank begins to croak*]

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

Dawn, the next morning. The fire has died down, but the embers still smoulder, and steam rises from the boiling water. A

faint grayish light steals into the woods. A rooster crows, very near. PAP wakes, sits up. The rooster crows again. PAP scrambles to his feet, finds a rock and steals out quickly. There is a flurried squawk, and in a moment PAP comes in again carrying a dead Dominecker rooster. He walks quietly, so as to disturb no one, ponders a bit, looks at the pot of boiling water, and making up his mind, hangs the dead bird on the wagon. Then he smiles with triumphant satisfaction, and lies down again.

In a moment, BUZZEY rises cautiously on one elbow and looks about carefully at the other men. Then he gets up and is stealing off into the woods with a rheumatic limp when PAP lifts himself up and calls in a hoarse whisper:

Pap. Hey!

Buzzey [*wheeling about as if shot*]. Sh!

[*He makes signs for PAP to shut up*]

Pap. Whur you goin'?

Buzzey. Sh!

Pap. Whur you goin', I said!

Buzzey. Criminee!

[*He steals back and motions PAP over to one side as far from the sleeping TEXAS as possible. PAP goes over reluctantly*]

Buzzey [*softly*]. Now go and lay down again like you was, you hear?

Pap. How's that?

Buzzey [*a little louder*]. I say, go and lay down again.

Pap. Lay down?

Buzzey [*nods a worried "Yes" and glances over anxiously toward TEXAS*]. And go back to sleep.

Pap [*grinning*]. Got all the sleep I want. [*He stretches luxuriously, and slaps his thighs*] See you limpin' like you got the rheumatiz.

Buzzey. Sh! You'll wake him up!

Pap. I don't keer. 'S daylight, ain't it? Hey, I kilt a rooster! He set in a black-jack tree a-crowin' and I f'ard just one rock and down he come!

Buzzey. Christamighty, shet up, cain't you?

Pap. A Dominecker rooster not two year old! They say it's bad luck to take the feathers offen a chicken kilt with a rock. Cook him, feathers and all! Course they say that toad frogs makes warts on you, too, but I don't b'lieve that. [*For the first time*

noticing BUZZEY's manner] You got the St. Vitus dance, er whut in tarnation ails you!

Buzzey. Listen—go and lay down and quit a-makin' noise, can't you?

Pap [suspiciously]. Whut're you up to?

Buzzey. Never mind. Do like I tell you.

Pap. My God, is this yore house or mine? I'll do as I like, Mr. Buzzey, and don't you fergit it!

Buzzey. Listen! You don't wanta lose Hannie, do you?

Pap. Lose Hannie? I ain't a-losin' her.

Buzzey. No, not *yit*! But it's a-comin'. The first thing you know this here Texas'll be runnin' off and takin' Hannie with him. Nen both of us'll be outa luck. I want her back for a wife, and you wanta keep her fer daughter. Looks like we could work together.

Pap. I don't know whut you're talkin' about. Who said Hannie was jist gonna up and hotfoot it after anybody that come along?

Buzzey. Looky here, you know about women, don't you?

Pap. Whut about 'em?

Buzzey [wisely]. Onct they've had a man, they can't get along without one.

Pap. Oh! I reckon that's right. I've knowed a heap of widders that ud take up with anything in pants.

Buzzey. Well, Hannie's a widder, ain't she?

Pap. Grass. You not bein' dead.

Buzzey. Grass or no grass, it's all the same.

Pap. Whut was you aimin' to do, then?

Buzzey [cautiously]. Go down here to Verdigrée, rouse up the marshal, and tell him whur Texas is at.

Pap. Whut'll you git out of it?

Buzzey. Well, I aim to jist keep after Hannie till she's all wore out, and she'll marry me to git rid of me follerin' her around.

Pap. And whut'd I get out of it?

Buzzey. Well, if Hannie goes back with me, you're always free to mosey along by my place and see her, ain't you? While if this here hell-raiser tuck her away, he'd likely end up way down in Texas some'eres, and the first you know, he'd trade Hannie off fer ten head of them Longhorn steers—and you'd never see hide ner hair of her again.

Pap [convinced]. Sh! Don't talk so

much, you'll wake him up! Why in hell didn't you go sooner?

Buzzey. I meant to, but I overslept.

Pap [outraged]. Overslept! This ain't no time fer oversleepin'! It's the time to shake yer tail and oversleep afterwards! Git on there now, and do whut you're a-gonna do!

Buzzey. Don't hurry me.

Pap. Stand around a-gabbin'! *Git!*

Buzzey [annoyed]. I'm a-gettin'.

[He starts out. TEXAS sits up, yawning]

Texas. Oh, is that you, Mr. Hale?

[BUZZEY stops as if shot]

Buzzey [swallowing]. Ye-yeah, it's me.

Texas. Goin' some'eres?

Buzzey [uncertainly]. Oh—g—goin' down along the crick bank.

Texas. Don't slip and fall in. Good mornin', Pap.

Pap. Mornin' yerself. Sleep all right?

Texas [stretching lazily]. Slept fine. But had sich a dream. [To BUZZEY, who is stealing out again] Hey, Mr. Hale! Come here, while I tell you. [BUZZEY comes back reluctantly] I was jist tellin' Pap Rader 'bout a dream. Quarest dream I ever had! It seemed like I was layin' here 'th my head up clost to the far, when I heard feet a-comin' and a-goin', and voices a-shakin' and spittin' out words, and I looked up and they was two men a-standin' over me. One of 'em—

Pap [worried]. This was a dream, wa'n't it?

Texas. This was a dream. One of these men had a bald head and looked like a buzzard, and the other'n looked like he was gonna fall plumb apart from bein' put together so loose.

Pap [with an unconvincing laugh]. Sounds like me and Buzzey!

Texas. Looked like you, all right. But the resemblance stopped right there, fer these two put their heads together, and I could hear every word they said, though they kept sh-ishin' each other, and whutta you think they was aimin' to do?

Buzzey. I—I couldn't tell you.

Texas. Them low-down wart-hogs was plannin' to sic the marshal on to me and put me in jail.

Pap. Why—why, whutta you know about that! You dreamt that, Mr. Texas?

Texas. That was a dream, all right.

Give me a cold sweat to think of it. I'm shore glad I woke up when I did, 'cause it felt like, in the dream, I was tied hand and foot a-layin' here on the ground, and couldn't move a muscle.

Pap. Hee, hee—kind of a narrow escape, wa'n't it?

Buzzey [meaning his own]. Shore was a narrow escape!

Texas [casually]. I'm glad it turned out to be a dream, fer if it hadn't a-been, I'd a-been compelled to rouse myself up, and cut the liver and lights outa both of them fellers, and th'ow 'em to the dogs, before breakfast.

Pap. That ud be the thing to a-done to 'em, all right. Ain't that right, Buzzey?

Buzzey [in alarm]. Ye-yeah, that's right. Well, I guess I—I got business down the crick a while.

Texas. Don't be in no hurry, Mr. Hale. Pap'll be givin' you some of that rooster a-fore long.

Buzzey. Rooster!

Texas [smiling]. Dominecker rooster, kilt with a rock.

Pap. My God!

Texas. Whut's the matter? 'D I dream that, too?

Pap. Holy Moses!

Texas [easily]. Don't you worry none, Pap. I won't tell on you fer killin' somebody's rooster. He made a lot of noise, anyway, and someone ort to a-kilt him. [Dropping his jesting manner, to Buzzey] Now looky here, you sneakin' pike, don't you never try a trick like that on me, or I'll make a stew outa you! You hear me!

Buzzey. W-whut kind of a trick, Mr. Texas?

Texas [fiercely]. You know, all right. I heard you. I'll bash yer head in next time. I'm a real easy-goin' man or I'd do it anyhow! And you, Pap Rader, a-listenin' to a sap-sucker like this un. I'd a-thought you had more sense in that pin head of yourn.

Pap. Well, blame me, I don't want you a-runnin' away with Hannie!

Texas. Whut've you got to do with Hannie?

Pap. Why, she's my daughter, ain't she?

Texas. I don't keer if she is yore daughter!

Pap. She's better off with me than she'd be with you.

Texas. Oh, is that so? I ain't fit com-

p'ny, is that it? Well, I'll jist tell you, whut I'm a-gonna do. I'm gonna learn you a lesson you won't fergit! [Boastingly] I'm gonna take Hannie away with me, after all. Hadn't meant to, a-tall. I'll put her under one arm and claw my way to clear down in the Verdigrée bottom some'eres outa sight, whur I c'n have her all by myself—and I don't know, after that!

Pap. She won't go with you.

Texas. She won't, huh? She'll jump at the chanct. I know a thing or two when I see it, I guess. She'd kick you both in the pants if I told her to, and lay down and let me walk on her. [Vulgarly.] Well, mebbe I don't mean walk on her.

Buzzey [outraged]. You quit it a-talkin' about my fo'mer wife, that-a-way!

Pap. You quit it a-talkin' about my fo'mer daughter that-a-way!

Texas [his tongue unloosed, enjoying himself]. And you won't never see her again, neither one of you. Why, she'll git so used to me, she'd spit in anybody's face that said a harm word about me! But after I git her well-trained to ride proper, I'm gonna leave her some'eres to git along the best way she can! Learn you two a lesson!

[The flap of the wagon is thrown aside angrily, and HANNIE comes down the steps]

Hannie. How's that, Mr. Texas?

Texas [like a punctured bag]. Eh—Whut're you— Whut?

Hannie. Whut's all this you're a-gonna do about me?

Texas. Why—why—I ain't aimin' to do nuthin'.

Buzzey. He said he was, Hannie! Said he was gonna walk on you, and spit in yer eye, and I don't know whut all he didn't say!

Hannie. Shet up, I'll tend to this! [Looking TEXAS over with great scorn] Lemme have a look at this hell-raisin' wonder. He don't look so big, and he don't look so handsome, but he's got a way with the women!

Buzzey. Give it to him, Hannie!

Pap [turning on BUZZEY]. Shet up, you!

Hannie. They drownd theirselves by the drove in the Rio Grande whenever he comes around! He's scalped the state of Texas, and run off 'th their wives. He was borned full-size with boots and chaps, and some giant for his pappy!

Buzzey. Yanh, sink a canthook in him!
Pap. Aw, let him alone, Hannie!

Hannie. He's fit his way into jail and outa jail, and he's a ring-tail tooter with a tongue a mile long, and if he don't like to use it!

Texas. Now, Hannie—!

Hannie [*blazing mad*]. Don't you Hannie me! Gonna run off with me, and me under yer arm, is that it?

Buzzey. He said he was, Hannie! Burn him up! Blister him!

Hannie. Gonna git me well-broke to like it, so I'd spit in my pappy's face if he said a word agin you, was that it!

Buzzey. Ever damn word, the side winder!

Hannie. My God, if I ever seen a lantern-jawed cock-eyed idiot that couldn't say "Boo!" to a flyer, you're it! Ever time I look at you, I git ringworm!

Texas. Now Hannie, listen to me—

Hannie. I listened to too much a'ready—

Texas. These two was plannin' to give me up to the law so I got mad and my tongue run off with me, cain't you understand?

Hannie. Understand? I'd druther see a cow full of wood ticks than to look at you.

Texas [*miserably*]. Aw, Hannie—

Hannie. Whyn't you beat it up the road, and find a place that ud suit you better? They ain't nuthin' here that's in yore style! And they ain't a soul here that wouldn't like to cut you up and feed you to the coyotes—if the coyotes could stand it! Personally I'd ruther have a nice big piece of a striped skunk! Beat it, I said!

Texas [*seeing he's ruined everything*]. I wish't you'd listen to me.

Hannie. Gether yer things and git!

Texas. I ain't got nuthin' to gether.

Buzzey [*suddenly becoming courageous*]. And don't you never come around decent folks again or they're li'ble to brand and dehorn you!

Pap [*turning on him*]. Shet up you,—let a feller alone, cain't you?

Buzzey. Well, I—

Pap. Let him alone! He ain't done nuthin' to you!

[*There is a crackle of twigs and running footsteps. The IKES burst into sight, in wild excitement*]

Red Ike. Hey, Texas, man a-comin'!

Black Ike. The marshal from Verdigrée!

Red Ike. Big man 'th a big black hat and a pistol!

Black Ike. Two pistols, and a ca'tridge belt a-poppin' 'th bullets!

Red Ike. Comin' along the road like a bat outa thunder!

Black Ike. Makin' the dust bile!

Red Ike. Hurry up, 'f you don't wanta see him!

Black Ike. Swim the crick!

Red Ike. Climb a tree!

Black Ike. Hide in the blackberry bushes!

Red Ike. Bury yerself in the ground! Go on, don't stand there!

Texas [*quietly*]. How's that?

Red Ike? Man a-comin', I tell you! The marshal from Verdigrée a-lookin fer trouble!

Texas. Oh, the marshal.

Red Ike. Well, hain't he the one you thought might come along? You ain't got a minute!

Black Ike. Shake yer traces!

Red Ike. Bust yer britchin'!

Black Ike. Rip and rair! Hide and hair! Swaller the air!

Texas. Let him come.

The IKES. What!

Texas. Let him come, I said.

Red Ike. Whut! You hain't a-gonna jist stand there?

Black Ike. He'll git you!

Red Ike. Th'ow you in jail—

Black Ike. Shoot a hole th'ough you!

Texas. We'll see about that.

Black Ike. Oh! Oh, I see! Gonna give him his money's worth!

Red Ike. Gonna fight him!

Black Ike. Bloody his nose!

Red Ike. Cave in his stummick!

Black Ike. Knock his years down!

Red Ike. Jamb all his teeth out! Whee, gonna be high ole doin's! [*Jumping around with excitement*] Fight, fight!

Black Ike [*doing the same*]. Bettin' on Texas!

Red Ike. Fight, fight!

Pap [*to the IKES*]. Here, you IKes—you make more noise 'n thirteen wildcats. [*To TEXAS*] You ain't gonna run?

Texas. No.

Pap. Well, I'm a-bettin' on you.

Texas. Much obliged.

Pap. You might get shot.

Texas. Well.

Pap. Tell you whut I'll do, pardner. 'F you git shot, I'll bury you nice—and put up a tomb stone made out of a weepin' willer tree. With a sign on it that says "He fit and died."

Texas. That'll be nice.

Pap. Oh, it tain't no trouble a-tall. [*He begins fixing the fire*] In that far— [*He points with a stick*]—I got hick'ry fer smoke, chestnut fer noise, white pine fer blaze, and oak fer slow-burnin'. That far is the original hell-far. 'F you say so, Texas, I'll give that marshal a little shove, and 'f he falls in it, that ain't my fault.

Texas [*shaking his head*]. Thanky, jist the same.

Pap. Oh, it wouldn't be a mite of trouble! Here he comes, I guess.

[*After a moment, the MARSHAL, a large, rather worried-looking man in a big black hat, comes in with a pistol in his hand. He stops short*]

Marshal. Hands up, the lot of you! [*They all put up their hands except HANNIE, who has backed up again the wagon steps*] You too, lady. [*She gives him a contemptuous look, and puts her hands up*] Now then, Mr. Borne-in-Texas, I've got you again. And this time, you ain't gonna git away. Course it wasn't me that let you git away before, jist remember that! My job was to git you before Jedge Snodgrass fer disturbin' the peace, and I got you there. I'd orta had more sense 'n to turned you over to that coward of a Neb, I reckon. But it's on his head fer lettin' you do whut you done to the jedge and the courtroom. Godamighty though, from the looks of things, you musta been full of elephant juice. You must be Mr. Samson, 'fore he got his hair cut! [*To PAP*] Is he a friend of yours?

Pap. Yes, sir, he's a friend of mine.

Buzzey [*butting in*]. He is not a friend of Pap's! Course we knowed who he was, Mr. Marshal, and I was aimin' to sneak off and tell you whur he was at. And Pap here was gonna help me.

Pap [*hotly*]. I was not! I jist had a brain storm fer about a minute a-listenin' to you a-shootin' off yer head! They hain't nuthin' to keep a feller from changin' his mind, is they? [*To the MARSHAL*] Why, Mr. Marshal, I'd be a purty sap-sucker to go a-turnin' anyone over to a hound-dog

like you! I don't like you ner no one that looks like you!

Marshal. Mebbe you better consider yoreself arrested, too.

Texas [*breaking in*]. Aw, let Pap alone, Mr. Marshal. 'F it's me you're after, well, you got me. We might jist as well hit the pike now, as to stand here a-talkin'.

Marshal [*surprised*]. Well, Mr. Texas, you hain't gonna put up no fight? You got more sense 'n I give you credit for. You hain't got a gun hid on you anywhurs, have you?

Texas. You tuck my gun away from me, didn't you?

Marshal. Yeah, I did.

Texas. Well, they don't grow on trees.

Marshal [*to Buzzey*]. Has he got ary gun on him?

Buzzey. I ain't saw ary un.

Marshal. Well. I'm much obliged to you, Mister, for yer good intentions. You c'n put yer hands down 'f you want to.

Buzzey [*putting his hands down*]. That's all right.

Marshal. How'd you happen to git mixed up 'th a crowd like this, anyhow?

Buzzey [*righteously*]. I ain't mixed up with it! I used to be kinda married to this womern here, but—she don't raily b'long to this here kind of crowd any more'n I do. I'm a farmer. Got a hundred and sixty acre up here by Vinita.

Marshal. Is that so? How's crops?

Buzzey. Turrible. These here h'ard hands has run off and left the Jimson weeds and cuckie burrs to smother up everthing I got planted.

Marshal. I used to be a farmer myself. 'F you ever need a good hand, you better not make me a offer, I'm li'ble to take it. I git awful 'tard of marshallin' fer a livin'. So that's yer wife, is it?

Buzzey. Well, I—you see—she used to be.

Marshal. Oh! I see. Well, good rid-dance, I reckon.

Buzzey [*angrily*]. Who said good rid-dance?

Marshal. Hain't it?

Buzzey. I never said it was.

Marshal [*tolerantly*]. Well, you ort to know.

Hannie [*breaking in angrily*]. Have I got to stand here 'th my hands in the air all day?

Marshal. I reckon *you* don't.

Hannie. Well, I hope not. Looks like you could shet up talkin' so much and take this here crimernal outa here. I'd be right glad. [*With real disappointment*] I thought he was sump'n special—a nine-footer—stridin' along 'th his head so high. Now I know he's jist a thing on stilts—and the stilts is all shaking and full of worm holes!

Texas. You don't raily mean that, do you, Hannie?

Hannie. Why don't I mean it?

Texas. Thought mebbe you wanted me to think it—jist 'cause I talked about you that a-way. I jist want to tell you—my talkin' don't mean nuthin'—

Hannie. It may not mean nuthin' to you but it does to me. Oh, you've got yerself into it, Mr. Texas, you might's well like it.

Texas. Well, I *don't* like it.

Hannie. Put me under yer arm and claw yer way down into the bottom, will you?

Texas. Go and rub it in.

Hannie. Ort to scratch yer eyes out!

Texas [*making a last attempt*]. Listen—if I git out of this—and come back—whut'll you do?

Hannie. Spit in yer face.

Texas. You shore?

Hannie [*deliberately*]. Right between the eyes.

Texas [*quietly*]. Well, I reckon I won't be back here, then. I reckon I won't be back *nowhure* now, till I git my second wind. I been winded 'cause I run seventeen mile 'thout stoppin' and by a cyclone smackin' me plumb in the face. But this is the first time I been knocked holler by a female. Kinda gits a feller down in the mouth.

[*The IKES, still with their hands in the air, begin to jump up and down like monkeys on strings*]

The IKES. Fight, fight, nigger and a white! Fight, fight!

Marshal. Here, you! Whut in hell's a-goin' on?

[*The IKES stop, abashed*]

Red Ike. Beg yer pardon, mister.

Marshal [*his mouth open*]. If this hain't the craziest gang of hoodlums I ever seen! I better git myself outa here 'fore I start to eatin' my shirt-tail er sump'n!

Texas. Whenever you're ready, Mr. Marshal.

Pap [*in utter astonishment*]. Ain't you gonna do nuthin', Texas?

Texas. No.

Pap. What! Not gonna boot this marshal in the tail and pick his teeth fer him?

Texas. No.

Pap. Er cut off his head and show it to him! Hain't you even gonna give him jist one in the jaw fer sample?

Texas. No.

Pap. Not gonna do a form thing? Well, fer lands a-livin'!

Hannie [*scornfully*]. Course he ain't! Didn't you know he wouldn't! [*To TEXAS*] "Two ways to keep outa trouble. Fight and talk." Don't look to me like he can do ary one!

Marshal. Come on, Mr. Texas. You c'n take yer hands down now. [*TEXAS puts his hands down and starts out*] And if you make one false move, I'll put a hole in you you c'n see daylight th'ough!

Texas. Looks to me like I've jist made false moves enough. And got quite a hole in me a'ready, fer my trouble. I reckon I'll jist try to keep from gettin' any more till the one I got is healed up a little bit.

[*He goes out, the MARSHAL following.*]

The others watch them, PAP and the IKES with their hands still in the air

Pap. Well, I'm a cow and a calf! [*He suddenly remembers his hands and jerks them down. The IKES follow suit*] God, I'm paralyzed! [*He rubs his arms*] Never lifted a finger!

Buzzey. Whut'd you expect?

Pap. Well, he mighta kicked the marshal on the shins onct, anyhow.

Buzzey [*joyously*]. I told you, I told you! [*He does an impromptu capering jig*] Coward and a liar, and a ring toom toom!

[*He grins with crazy exuberance*]

Hannie. Whut a fool!

[*She starts up the steps*]

Buzzey [*going over*]. Shore proud of you, Hannie! A womern after my own heart. Glad you come to yer senses. Shore had me worried fer a minute, I tell you! I fergive you, though. Yes sir, I fergive and fergit, that's the way I am. Won't we have us a time, though? Git yer things together quick, and go home with me, right away! Hurry up!

Hannie [*stopping in astonishment*]. How's that?

Buzzey. Jump a train to Claremore, git spliced, hitched up together again the same

as before! Nen after that, we'll hop an-
other train, and git home 'fore sundown!

Hannie [*unable to believe her ears*]. Go home with you? [*She laughs uproariously*] Jawbone of a whale and hock of a terrapin! [*She turns on him, outraged and amused*] Go home with you? Why, you little dried-up blue-nosed old buzzard smellin' of a dead cow in the summer time! Go home with a corpse!

[*She comes down the wagon steps*]

Buzzey [*bewildered*]. Hannie!

Hannie. If you knowed whut I was gonna do, you'd have a conniption fit! Come on, you Ikes! We're a-goin' some'eres!

[*She dashes off into the woods, the IKES dashing after her like a pair of grinning monkeys*]

Buzzey [*dazed*]. My God, now whut's come over her!

SCENE TWO

Two hours later. About 6 A.M.

The wrecked courtroom. At the back, the judge's stand, on its little dais, is turned over; a picture hangs almost upside down above it. One of the windows is broken, benches are overturned. The door stands open, sagging on one hinge.

The MARSHAL brings TEXAS in.

Texas [*laughing*]. Jist look at this courtroom! Did I do all this?

Marshal. Course you did! But they ain't nuthin' funny about it!

Texas [*with huge mirth*]. Any kind of courtroom is funny to me. But a wrecked courtroom—my, oh, my! And whut goes on in courtrooms is funnier yit!

Marshal [*with satisfaction*]. Anh, you didn't think you'd be back here so quick, though, did you?

Texas. I didn't think.

Marshal. I reckon you didn't. Look at this yere room. Mince meat! And you shore gonna pay fer it, too. The jedge'll be here any minute now, and mebbe he won't be glad to see you, Mr. Texas!

Texas. You reckon?

Marshal. I know.

Texas. My, my! Hey, think I'll jist put things to rights a little bit.

[*He starts turning up benches*]

Marshal [*threateningly*]. Here, whut're you up to?

Texas. This ain't no decent kind of a

room to hold court in. Look at that there jedge's desk, will you? [*He up-ends it, and puts it back where it belongs*] Now how did that pitcher git plumb upside down that a-way?

[*He straightens the picture over the desk, but takes so long doing it, that the MARSHAL comes over suspiciously*]

Marshal. Whut you tryin' to do 'th that pitcher?

Texas. Jist fixin' it so it won't fall down again, till it ort to. And them benches! And that winder! [*With delight*] I musta been goin' good! I'll tell you, Mr. Policeman, how it happened. [*Confidentially*] I musta been drunk.

Marshal. Musta been?

Texas [*with regret*]. It ain't right, neither, to git so drunk.

Marshal. I should say it ain't right.

Texas. Why, I mighta kilt somebody. And then whur'd I be?

Marshal. Whur'd you think you air, now?

Texas [*ruefully*]. Yeow, I guess that's right, Mister. You got a head on you! I'll tell you, though, if I'd a-kilt anyone, I'd ruther it ud been you I kilt, 'stid of that spindly little jedge.

Marshal. You better be keeful whut you say!

Texas. A little runt like him, 'twouldn't a-made no difference. If I kilt a man, I'd want it to be a man, or it wouldn't be worth the trouble.

Marshal [*with pride*]. You'd find it a hard job to kill me, Mr. Texas, and don't you forget it!

Texas. I bet I would, too. But it ud be worth it!

Marshal [*doubtfully*]. I ain't so shore I like whut you're a-sayin'—all this yere talk about killin'—

Texas. Don't you pay no attention to me, Mr. Town Marshal. Don't you worry yore head about me. I ain't worth yore time. A liar and a thief and a murderer like me—why, you orten't to stay in the same room with me. Whyn't you wait outside?

Marshal [*worried*]. Gittin' me worried. I'll jist set here and keep you covered 'th my gun!

[*He takes his pistol out of the holster*]

Texas. Whut size pistol you got, Mister?

Marshal. That ain't none of yore business! You're a prisoner.

Texas [*placatingly*]. I didn't mean no harm. Jist wanted to warn you—that gun of your'n had better be a 44. Why, I turn 38s.

Marshal [*grimly*]. Well, you'll be glad to know this is a 45.

Texas. Oh, that's all right, then! [*He looks out the window, grinning*] Jist look at that jail—a layin' all over Indian Territory!

Marshal [*looking at his watch*]. Crimine! Here it is six o'clock! I can't figger out why Jedge Snodgrass ain't come—I sent fer him long enough ago. [*He looks out the door*] Well, here he is now, and high time. No, 'taint—it's Neb—

Texas. Is that the feller's name that was supposed to guard me in the calaboose—?

[*He grins*]

Marshal. That's his name, all right—but I don't see whut's so funny about that?

Texas. You hain't tuck a good look at him, then!

Marshal. Say, you're a hell of a prisoner, you air! Ain't you got no respect fer the law?

Texas. How's that?

Marshal. I say, ain't you got no respect fer the law, a-tall?

Texas. Me? Have I been a-breakin' the law again?

Marshal. Have you been a— Whutta you think I arrested you fer in the first place?

Texas [*regretfully*]. If I don't have the damndest time! Seems like I'm always breakin' some law or other 'thout knowin' it. Must be might nigh a thousand laws in this yere country. Why, I break one ever time I turn around to spit!

[*He spits*]

Marshal [*outraged*]. Quit it a-spittin on the floor!

Texas. My God, I guess that's a law, too! Law! A man's walkin' along a purty road a-singin'. Up comes a marshal 'th a gun, drags him into a ugly courtroom. The judge gives him twelve days. Whut fer?

[*He sits down glumly*]

[*Neb, very much patched up, comes in at the door*]

Marshal [*grinning in spite of himself*]. If you ain't a sight now—!

Neb [*resentfully, glaring at Texas*]. You'd be a sight, too, if a mule kicked you!

Marshal. I guess I know what mule's been a-kickin' you! [*He grins*] Whur's Jedge Snodgrass at?

Neb. He's a-comin', I reckon.

Marshal. Well, whyn't he hurry up?

Neb. Guess he can't.

Marshal [*exasperated*]. Well, why can't he? Ain't he up yit—and it six o'clock? Here I go and ketch him this runaway prisoner, and now I got to go and wait a half a hour fer him to git here! Why's it tuck him so long?

Neb [*angrily*]. Ast him why it's tuck him so long! Don't ast me!

Marshal. Whew! Ain't in a very good humor, air you?

Neb. Well, whut'd you go and put a wild-cat in my jail fer?

Texas. I'm sorry, pardner, I didn't mean to th'ow you out the winder. They ain't no hard feelin's, I hope.

[*He starts toward him*]

[*Neb leaps back with a scream, snatches up a chair, and stands with it poised over his head, hysterically*]

Neb. Git away from me! Stand back there, er I'll shore brain you 'th this cheer!

Marshal. You must be skeered of him, Neb.

Neb. He better stand back, I tell you!

Texas. I ain't gonna hurt you.

Neb [*wildly*]. Marshal, can't you call him off! I ain't a-skeered of him, but I'm shore li'ble to hurt him! Git back now, I told you!

[*A grim little man hobbles in at the open door*]

Marshal. Good mornin', Jedge!

[*The Judge goes and sits down behind his desk without a word*]

Judge [*after a moment, coldly, rapping on his desk*]. Order in the courtroom! [*Neb drops his chair, but stands holding it in readiness*] I ain't a-goin to pay no attention to the rightfulness or wrongfulness of procedure this mornin'. The court's been defied and spit on, and I'm gonna do some defyin' and spittin' myself! This here feller here has got drunk, which is agin the law. He's smashed up the courtroom, which is agin the law. He's broke outa jail after beatin' up the guard, which is agin the law. He's run plumb away, which is also agin the law. Fer gettin' drunk, I only sentenced him to twelve days in the calaboose. Now

then—addin' on to that—fer smashin up the courtroom and fer breakin' outa jail—

Neb. And fer beatin' up the guard!

Judge. And fer beatin' up the guard, yes, sir, fer all that I'm gonna sentence him some more.

Marshal. Whut about fer beatin' up the Judge?

Judge. Shet up! Nobody ast you to speak! I'm gonna sentence him then—fer gettin' drunk, fer resistin' officers, fer disturbin' the peace, fer escapin' and fer damagin' property—and mebbe—in case anyone dies—fer murder. That'll be six months in jail and a fine of a hundred dollars. Mebbe I better make it two hundred. Now then—*[To TEXAS]* Have you got anything to say?

Texas. I—I don't think you ort to sentence me that-a-way, Judge—

Judge. Why not?

Texas. Well, I ain't got two hundred dollars—

Judge [haughtily]. That ain't no excuse.

Texas. And you ain't got no jail.

Judge. Whut! Whut's the matter 'th the jail?

Texas [abashed]. Well, I—I reckon a cyclone struck it.

Judge. D' you mean to tell me—! *[He jumps down from his dais, and hobbles rapidly to a window, and looks out. He turns on NEB]* Whut'd you let him tear the roof offen yer jail fer!

Neb [terrified]. I—I didden let him. He jist done it, Judge.

Judge [disgusted]. Didn't let him!

Neb. And he wouldn't a-done it but—but he went and tied me up first.

Judge. Tied you up! Whut kind of a guard air you, anyway! Whut's the use of havin' a jail 'f you can't keep a feller in it?

Neb. I don't know, Judge.

Judge [apoplectic]. Don't know! Well, I know jist whut you c'n do, Neb Withers. I'm gonna turn this prisoner over to you again, and if he gits away this time, you c'n serve his sentence and pay his fine.

Neb [miserably]. But, Judge, they ain't no jail to keep him in.

Judge [grimly—going back to his desk]. Well, you'll jist have to keep him with out a jail, then.

Neb. But Judge, I—I cain't keep him with me 'f he doan wanta stay.

Judge. You got handcuffs, ain't you?

Neb. Do I have to handcuff him to me?

Judge. That would be a good idy.

Neb. But Judge—I cain't have that! I'm a married man!

Judge. That don't make no difference!

Neb [righteously]. Judge, I know that ain't a-gonna be right.

Judge. Shet up!

Neb. It ain't!

Judge. Have you got a better idy 'n that, then? We got to do sump'n with him.

Neb. Well now—the marshal here ain't married.

Marshal [advancing on him, fiercely]. I'll break yore neck!

[NEB snatches up his chair again]

Judge [pounding on his desk]. Order in the courtroom! *[A frowzy middle-aged giggling woman, looking as though she had dressed hastily, her hair stringy and uncombed, comes in at the door. The men turn to look]* Oh, my God! Whutta you want in here, Miz Foster?

Mrs. Foster [gives a short high excited giggle, and slides into a chair]. Oh! It's a court, ain't it? Open to the public? I seen you all a-comin up the road, and thought I'd see whut you was up to, so early in the mornin'. Is that the prisoner? Why, if 'tain't the same one you had here yistiddy! My, that big, strong un! Howd' do, Prisoner? Glad to see you back! *[She flutters a hand at him]*

Judge [pounding on the desk]. Order in the courtroom!

Mrs. Foster. Don't you mind me, Judge. I ain't gonna be a mite of trouble. Jist gonna scrouge down here and watch things. You don't even have to think about me. Jist go right on 'th yore jedgin'. My brother that used to steal hogs always said, "They ain't no use in goin' up before Judge Snodgrass, fer you're shore to git ninety days in the calaboose, wh'er you're guilty er not." Course he—

Judge [outraged]. Order, I said!

Mrs. Foster. Course Davy was always guilty, Judge. I'll say that fer you! Looked like he jist couldn't keep his hands offa hogs. I'll never fergit one time he seen a—

Judge [pounding on the desk]. Miz Foster! 'F you don't shet up a-talkin' about hogs and things, you'll have to leave the courtroom!

Mrs. Foster [huffily]. Well, I must say!

I ain't interferin' 'th justice, am I? You'd think I was tryin' to, the way you talk—

Judge. I didn't say you was interferin'. I jist said *shet yer mouth!*

Mrs. Foster. Er I ain't tried to kick up no rumpus or nuthin'. I jist come in and set down, and you go to jumpin' on me!

Texas [*going over toward her*]. I beg your pardon, lady, but you're a-gettin the Jedge all excited—and the more excited he gits, the harder it's a-gonna be on me. So—d' you reckon you'd not say another word fer a minute er two, like a good girl, nen we'd appreciate hearin' yore voice again, a-soundin' like a gold trumpet, the way it does.

Mrs. Foster. Why, Mr. Prisoner! Whut a nice man you air! I hope they don't give you much of a sentence!

Texas. Sh! Now then, Mr. Jedge, whut was you a-sayin' when this lady come in?

Judge [*snapping*]. How'd I know? [*Rebelligiously*] 'F you think it's a cinch to run a court when people air alwys a-buttin' in—!

Texas [*placatingly*]. Sure, I know it must be a hard job, all right. I wouldn't have yore job fer nuthin'—

Judge [*belligerently*]. Well, whut's the matter 'th my job, I'd like to know! 'F you don't stop a-criticizin' me, I ain't gonna hold court.

Texas. I ain't a-criticizin' you, Jedge—

Judge. Won't go on 'th the trial—I jist turn you a-loose and not have none, you don't stop a-makin' remarks—!

Texas. That wouldn't be right, Jedge, not to *try* me, now you *got* me here. Jist a-wastin my time—

Judge [*sulking*]. First everbody interrupts me, and now you go to sayin' you wouldn't have my job fer nuthin'—!

Texas. But Jedge, I only meant 'cause it was sich a *hard* job—

Judge. Oh! Why didden you say so—! You all conspirin' again' me anyhow—I'm a good mind not to go on.

Texas. Aw, go on, Jedge, nobody meant a form thing—

Judge. Well, if they's any more a-blockin' of justice, I'm gonna jist walk out the door and not come back.

Texas. Nuthin' else is gonna block things, Jedge. You jist go right on a-jedgin'.

Judge. Well then. Order in the courtroom! As I was a-sayin' when Miz Foster come a-buttin' in—

Marshal [*interrupting*]. You wasn't a-sayin' anything, Jedge, it was *me*.

Judge [*pounding*]. Order, I said!

Marshal. Neb here had been a-puttin' you up to handcuff this prisoner to me, and I'd jist said to Neb I'd break his neck. And I will, too!

[*He glares at NEB*]

Neb. You better keep yer dirty hands offa me!

Judge [*pounding*]. Here, here! [*To TEXAS, wildly*] You see there, if 'tain't one thing, it's another! Shet up, you two, quit it!

Marshal. Beg yer pardon, Jedge, I'll shet up. But if that little wart ever opens his head to me!—

Neb. Don't you call me no little wart!

Judge [*fiercely*]. Shet up!

[*There is a moment of silence, then HANNIE and the IKES rush in at the door. HANNIE runs over to TEXAS at once*]

Hannie. Well, Godamighty, Texas! If you hain't a purty un! No gumption! I'm ashamed of you! [*To the MARSHAL, fiercely*] You let this man alone, you hear, or they'll be trouble! You had a lot to do anyway, breakin' in to our camp and makin' everbody stand around 'th their hands in the top of a sycamore tree!

[*The JUDGE, with icy rage, comes down from his desk and to everyone's astonishment, puts the gavel in HANNIE'S hand*]

Judge. Here! You run this court, you're so smart! [*To the MARSHAL*] Mr. Marshal, I'm gonna git someone to fix the jail, and if you let this prisoner git away while I'm gone, I'll shore crown you when I git back!

[*He hobbles out angrily*]

Hannie. Well, of all the— Whut's the matter 'th *that* ole mustard-plaster? Whut'd he give me this here thing fer? Oh! That was the Jedge, wa'n't it? [*In high humor*] Well, you heared whut he said! "Run this court yerself," didn't he? That ud be a good un! I'd do it right! I'd tear up the courtrooms and burn down the jails. I'd turn all the prisoners loose, let 'em run hog-wild. I'd give 'em money, I'd show 'em the road. That's the kinda jedgin' I'd do!

[*She goes toward the JUDGE'S stand*]

Marshal. Now look out, you better stay down from there!

Hannie. I'd scalp all the guards, th'ow the marshals in the crick!

Marshal. Git down from there, I told you!

Hannie. I'd burn all the law books, and start all over. I'd tell nobody whur to stand, and nobody ud tell me whur to set!

Marshal [outraged]. This hain't right, it hain't reg'lar! And if you don't shet up, I'll arrest you for contempt!

[The IKES make a leap at him. The MARSHAL fumbles for his pistol. But he has forgotten all about TEXAS, in his anger, and turned his back on him. TEXAS quickly knocks the pistol out of his hand. The IKES jump on it, scrambling for it. The MARSHAL makes a jump for it, but is too late]

Texas [interfering]. Here, shoot yerself, you crazies! Gimme that gun! *[One of the IKES hands it over]* Well, damned if it hain't mine, anyway! I thought I reco-nized it! Whur's yer own pistol at?

Marshal [outraged]. I'll fix you, ever damn one of you! I'll have the law on you!

[The IKES snicker]

Hannie [pounding]. Here, here! Is it the law you're talkin' about, Mr. Marshal? Here's the law! This thing! A polished piece of post-oak a-poundin' on a holler piece of pine! That's the law!

[The MARSHAL turns on his heel, disgusted, and starts toward the door]

Texas [covering him]. Wait jist a minute! Do you want a piece of lead in yer left kidney? Whur you goin' in sich a hurry?

Marshal [sullenly]. No place!

Texas. Goin' after help, I reckon. You better set down here and behave yoreself *[Mrs. FOSTER has risen, frightened to death, and is going toward the door]* You, too, lady.

Mrs. Foster. I want out!

Texas. Set down. *[She scurries back and sits down, close to the MARSHAL. NEB has snatched up his chair again, and stands shivering in the corner]* Put that cheer down. *[NEB puts it down reluctantly]* You better set here by the marshal, too.

[NEB goes over and sits down. The IKES begin to jump up and down in crazy excitement]

The IKes. Fight, fight, nigger and a white! Fight, fight, nigger and a—

Texas. You, too! Shet up! *[They stop]* Now then! *[He grins with delight]* This is jist the kind of courtroom I like! The law—with its teeth pulled—and the prisoner with a shootin' arn! *This here is justice!* And I guess I better make the most of it while I'm able. It don't come to a feller often. Now I got my pistol back and my stren'th back. Now I'm myself again. I hadn't orter ever laid myself li'ble to the br'ars that scratch people like you-all. I'm savin' my blood—to make a worth-while river out of! I'm shore powerful glad to 've met you-all. And I don't wish you no more bad luck than the cholery morbus. See you all in hell!

[He starts to go]

Hannie. Jist a minute!

Texas. Well?

Hannie. Don't be in no hurry!

Texas [grimly]. I've fooled around enough in these parts. It ain't healthy.

Hannie. Air you as blind 's a bat?

Texas. I ain't got no time to waste a-answerin' fool questions. You've let me in fer enough now.

Hannie [angrily]. Me? Why, you over-grown razorback, I have?

Texas. Yes, you.

Hannie. I'd like to know how!

Texas. Now looky here. Not two hours ago, you got up on yer year, and told the marshal to tote me off to jail fer you couldn't stand me around! And that hain't all! Before *that*, you tuck sich a mean crack at me that I was knocked fer a barrel of staves, and didn't keer *whut* happened to me. Do you think I'd a-let that bastard of a marshal a-tuck me off so easy, if you hadn't gone and stuck a knife in me up to the handle!

Hannie. Blamin' me, is that it?

Texas. Blamin' you! I'd orter jerk yer hind leg off, and th'ow it in yer face!

Hannie. Try it, and see how fur you git with it!

Texas. Fer two cents I would. But I got better things to do, thank'y jist the same. So long to you! And be damned to you!

Hannie [levelly]. If I tuck good aim, I could haul off and brain you 'th this here piece of wood they call the law.

Texas [appalled]. You're about the meanest womern I ever seen! First you git me in trouble, nen you want to brain me!

Hannie [coldly]. I ast you a minute ago if you was blind 's a bat.

Texas. I don't pay no attention to fool questions.

Hannie [with finality]. That tells on you, Mr. Texas. Now I'm gonna give you a little advice 'fore you start out of here to scalp the state of Texas again. Listen—when anybody asts you a fool question, it's worth a-lookin' into, fer it might mean sump'n. That's all I got to say. Now you c'n beat it.

Texas [pausing]. Am I as blind as a bat? Well, no, I ain't.

Hannie. You air, too.

Texas. I ain't!

Hannie. You air!

Texas. I ain't!

Hannie. You air!

[HANNIE, furious, throws the gavel at him. He picks it up, grinning]

Texas. Now I guess I got the law on my side!

[HANNIE comes down from the desk, slowly]

Hannie. Now then, you c'n do things fer yerself. I'm th'ough with you. I thought mebbe yer head wasn't quite as thick's a board. Now I know it's thick 's the Rocky Mountains—and then some! You're as green as grass, and ignorant 's a blind goose in a thunder-storm. You don't know two whoops about women, and whut you don't know about *anything* would make thirty million books full of close printin'. When you first come along last night, I kinda tuck to you. God knows why I didn't have more sense! I thought you stepped right off a mountain some'eres. I thought you was full of shine like a scoured pot. I thought if you set, the sun ud set. Nen this mornin', when I heard you shootin' off yer head, I was mad as a settin' hen, fer about five minutes. When I ast you jist now if you was blind 's a bat, I mighta knowed the answer! Course you're blind as a bat—blind as forty-seven bats! If you wasn't, you'd see I've hotfooted it clear here to Verdigree, waded th'ough weeds and bresh and got chiggers on me all the way from my feet to whur I set down! And whut fer? To try to git a fool of a man outa trouble that's had a landslide in his head, and cain't even remember who he's supposed to be! Now, git outa my way!

Texas [amazed]. *Hannie!*

Hannie. Don't you *Hannie me!*

Texas. You cain't leave here *now!*

Hannie. Oh, cain't I? Move yerself away from that door.

Texas. Do you mean everthing you jist said?

Hannie. Course I do, you fool! Includin' "Git away from that door, and let me outa here."

Marshal [jumping to his feet]. I hain't a-gonna stand any more of this! I never seen sich goin's-on in a court of law! Makin' a fool outa me, and the courtroom, too! Blamed if I don't—

Texas [turning the pistol on him]. Set down, and don't you move a eyelash, er I'll shoot it off.

[HANNIE marches out the door]

Marshal. Neb, you cowardy skeer-cat! 'F you had a little get-up and guts, you wouldn't set there— Come on and help me, cain't you?

Neb. I—I—I cain't he'p you hone, Marshal. I'm all crippled up now!

[The IKES make a running leap out the door]

Texas. Here, here! [The MARSHAL advances on him] Git back there. You heard me! Now you've made me let Hannie git away, you clumpin' fool! Couldn't you a-set still fer five more minutes!

[PAP and BUZZEY run in]

Pap. Hey, Texas! Thought mebbe they was shootin' you at sunrise! Mighta knowed they wouldn't be! Whur's Hannie goin' in sich a hurry?

Texas. I don't know. She give me hell, and beat it.

Pap. Give you hell? She must be crazy about you, to take so much trouble!

Texas [suddenly, struck by an idea]. Hey, Pap! Do me a favor?

Pap. Shore.

Texas. Take this here pistol, and hold the marshal here a while. I got business to tend to! Here, take it!

Pap. I—I— [Uncertainly] I don't know—I might shoot myself! Whut're you up to, anyway?

Texas. Never mind, now! Tain't a-gonna hurt you none to he'p me out, is it? You hold the marshal here fer me a little bit, whutta you say?

Pap. I don't want to go and git mixed up with the law that-a-way— It ain't safe.

Texas. In a hour, I'll be back and git you

outa here, I tell you! Come on, like a good feller! Thought you was my friend—

Pap [weakening]. Well, I—

Buzzey [breaking in]. Don't you do it, Pap! Cain't you see whut he's up to? He's gonna git Hannie and run plumb away with her, like I told you!

Texas. Why, you little blue-faced ole buzzard, you! *[He shoves the pistol into PAP's reluctant hand]* And this, too. *[He forces the gavel on him]* I jist wanta do sump'n. Been a-wantin' to fer a long time! *[He picks BUZZEY up, and shakes him briskly, like a dog shaking a rat]* I ort to hurt you, but you're too damn little! *[While he is shaking BUZZEY, the MARSHAL gives a leap and lands on TEXAS' back. TEXAS drops BUZZEY, and shakes the MARSHAL off. The MARSHAL springs at him again furiously, and TEXAS strikes him full on the jaw. He goes over, knocked out cold]* That'll take keer of you fer a little bit! Gimme my gun, gimme that thing, quick! *[He grabs gun and gavel]* I've spent entirely too much of my time in this neighborhood! It don't pay—!

[He dashes out the door]

Pap [staring after him, admiringly]. My, I like that feller!

ACT THREE

The roadside again, an hour or so later. The sun has risen and a golden light slants in among the trees. Mockingbirds, larks, sing in the branches. The fire still burns, its smoke rising. The IKES are sitting flat on the ground about ten feet apart, each with a hat full of blackberries picked from the roadside. RED IKE has his mouth wide open and his head thrown back; BLACK IKE is throwing blackberries, one by one, at the yawning mouth.

Red Ike [after several unsuccessful attempts]. You can't hit me.

Black Ike. You can't ketch. Open yer mouth.

Red Ike. It's open.

Black Ike. Wider. *[RED opens his mouth as wide as possible]* Th'ow yer head back. *[RED does so]* Shet yer eyes.

Red Ike. They're shet. *[BLACK takes careful aim this time, and is successful. RED chews]* 'S about time.

Black Ike. Open yer mouth. *[RED obeys*

all instructions] Wider. Th'ow yer head back. Shet yer eyes. Tight. *[He picks carefully among his berries, gets on his knees, leans forward and throws something in RED's mouth, and jumps back again, quickly]* How's that un?

Red Ike [chewing]. 'S all right, kinda sandy. Holy—jumpin'—

[He shudders and spits desperately, trying to clear out his mouth]

Black Ike [grinning innocently]. Whut's the matter?

Red Ike. Anh, you've went and th'owed an ole stink bug in my mouth! *[He jumps up, picking up his hat full of berries, and throws them wildly, hat and all, at BLACK who scrambles away and dashes off into the woods, snickering]* Come back and fight. You coward! I'll fix you! *[He sits down again]* I'll eat up all yer berries.

[He begins to eat them out of BLACK's hat]

Black Ike [popping back in]. Aw, I hain't had none yit.

Red Ike. I don't keer. Th'owin' a stink bug down a feller's th'ot.

Black Ike. Don't eat 'em all.

Red Ike [smacking his lips]. Shore good.

Black Ike. Red.

Red Ike. Well?

Black Ike. I didn't know it was a stink bug.

Red Ike. Oh, you didn't?

Black Ike. No, I didn't. I thought it was a spider.

Red Ike. Oh! Well, that's all right, then. Set down, and I'll hit you now.

Black Ike [sitting down about five feet away and opening his mouth]. Hit me, then.

Red Ike [picking up a berry and throwing at the open mouth]. There.

Black Ike [chewing]. Missed.

Red Ike. Missed, hell. Open yer mouth. *[He throws again]*

Black Ike [chewing]. Missed again. *[He leans over, grabs a handful of berries and stuffs them into his mouth]* I can't wait. I'm too hungry.

[HANNIE comes down the steps of the wagon. She looks forlorn and distressed]

Red Ike [snatching up the berries]. Here, don't eat 'em all up! Hannie ain't had none yit.

[He gets up and holds them out to her]

Hannie. Whut is it?

Red Ike. Blackberries.

Hannie [*shaking her head*]. No.

Red Ike. They're gooder'n any you ever saw. Me'n Black found 'em side of the road.

Hannie. I don't want any.

Red Ike. You ain't had no breakfast a-tall.

Hannie. I ain't hongry.

Black Ike [*coming forward*]. Me'n Red'll go down here to that place the aide of the woods, and swipe you some mushmelons, won't we, Red?

Red Ike. Mushmelons and watermelons both.

Hannie. I told you I hain't hongry, and I mean I hain't hongry.

Black Ike. Aw, Hannie, 'tain't right not to eat. Hey! We'll go and find you some eggs in that farmhouse down yander.

Hannie [*with finality*]. I don't want eggs. I don't want no breakfast, and I'd thank you to shet up about it.

Black Ike. Oh! She'd thank you to shet up, Red.

Red Ike. Shet up, yerse'f.

Hannie [*to herself*]. I don't know whur he could be—

Red Ike. How's that?

Hannie. Did I say anything?

Red Ike. You said, "I don't know whur he could be."

Hannie [*after a moment*]. Well, I don't. Go and see 'f you c'n find him anywhurs.

Red Ike. Texas? Why, last we seen of him, he was in the courtroom—

Hannie. I ain't talkin' about Texas. I'm talkin' about Pap.

Red Ike. Oh. [*To BLACK*] She's a-talkin' about Pap. She don't know whur he's at.

Black Ike. I ain't deaf.

Hannie. I'm a-gettin' right sick of this place, and the quicker we move from here, the better I'll like it. You Ikes scout around and see 'f you cain't find Pap. He couldn't have went fur. Quick's you find him, we'll beat it—and I hope to God I never come this-a-way again. I'll be a-getherin' 'up things—

Black Ike. Hain't you gonna wait and see 'f Texas comes?

Hannie. Whut's Texas got to do with it?

Black Ike. Well, I—

Hannie. Nuthin' is the answer. Now git on outa here.

Red Ike. Whut about Buzzey? Want us to find him, too?

Hannie. I'd plumb fergot all about Buzzey!

Red Ike [*grinning, wisely*]. That's whut I thought.

Hannie. Don't think so much, you'll rupture yerse'f.

[*She begins gathering up pots and pans, and throwing them at, and into the wagon*]

Red Ike. Come on, Black—

[*They start off*]

Hannie. Don't ferget whut you're goin' after.

Red Ike. You hain't in a very good humor, air you?

Hannie [*snapping at him*]. Shet up, 'f you don't like it.

[*They go out. She picks up a battered tin pan and throws it petulantly at the wagon*]

[*TEXAS comes in along the road, quickly*]

Texas. Hannie. [*She turns, sees him and, without a word, goes quietly toward the wagon steps*] You ain't runnin' away from me, air you, Hannie?

Hannie. I doan know you from Adam.

Texas. Don't you do me that-a-way, Hannie.

Hannie. Whut a-way?

Texas. Not havin' no words with me.

Hannie. I had plenty of words with you before. I wish I never had.

Texas [*seizing the opening*]. Nen why'n't you play like you never seen me before? I jist come along the road this minute, see, and who do I spy but a purty womern all by her lonesome? Nice place you got here, lady.

Hannie [*playing the game, but without amusement*]. Thank you.

Texas. 'S a fairish mornin' 'th all them mockin' birds singin' in them ellums. Heared lots of meaderlarks 's I come along, too.

Hannie. Yeah, they sing.

Texas. Purty. How's all yer folks?

Hannie. Dead, thank you.

Texas [*with mock sympathy*]. That's too bad. Tyford fever?

Hannie. The war in Cuby. Rose-uvelt.

Texas. Oh!

Hannie. You may think this is funny, but it's jist plain silly to me.

Texas [*acquiescing*]. That's whut I think. [*Gravely*] Listen to me, Hannie. I hain't got much time. I got to talk to you. I never seen a womern like you in my life. You got me buffaloed complete. I don't know whe'r you like me or cain't stand the ground I walk on. All I know is, we're sump'n alike. I've roamed all over and never seen a womern before that was half as crazy as me. You're *twice* as crazy.

Hannie. Thank you.

Texas [*with passion*]. You're crazy and reckless and wild. So'm I. You're walkin' the earth temporary like you knowed sump'n secret. So'm I. You don't belong to nobody. You make a feller wonder big and step fur. You got eyes and hair—*ever-thing* a little better'n the next womern, and you suit me down to the ground. I git awful lonesome bein' all by myself, and it looks like you would.

Hannie [*shortly*]. I ain't all by myself.

Texas. Well, whut've you got? Yer Pap fer comp'ny. You go travelin' around—with yer Pap—in that ole covered wagon all fallin' to staves.

Hannie. I like to travel.

Texas. So do I. And I'm pe'tickler who I travel with.

Hannie. Air you invitin' me to travel with you?

Texas. I was headed in that direction.

Hannie [*contemptuously*]. Hunh. Whut'd I git out of it?

Texas. Fun. See things!

Hannie. I been seein' things ever since I was borned.

Texas. Camp in the heat of the day in the shade!

Hannie. That's whut me and Pap does.

Texas. Swim in the cricks! Watch it git sun-up and sun-down! See lightnin', hear thunder! Walk on the wind! Burn yer tail-feathers on the sun! Feed natural, sing strong, sleep together! Stop when you feel like stoppin'. Stay put when you feel like stayin' put.

Hannie. Well, that's sump'n. Pap's al-ways in a hurry.

Texas. Well, Godamighty! They's more fun than travelin' 'th yer old man.

Hannie. Is that so?

Texas. I don't have to tell you that, do I? When a feller travels, he wants to travel all by hisself, er in some other kinda comp'ny besides his relations. A man—and

a womern to match him, that's the proper idy!

Hannie. Hunh. If it's jist a man I wanted I could have Buzzey again. The fact is—I've made up my mind: Buzzey c'n have me. Now you know.

Texas [*blandly*]. Will he travel?

Hannie. Course he will.

Texas. Course he *won't*. He'd want you to set on his farm again, with yer hands in yer lap—a-shellin' beans. [*Disgusted*] Hunh! A purty life! Buzzey— Good God! You was so lonesome fer a man you tuck up 'th the first thing that come along in pants. Buzzey, hunh? Old Empty Britches.

Hannie. He give me purty clothes. He was good to me.

Texas. Good to you? Go back to him, then! 'F you went with me, I'd spank yer tail 'f I felt like it.

Hannie [*with passion*]. And 'f I went with you, I'd scratch yer face fer you reglar—and fer good reason.

Texas [*coming close*]. I'd call you a wench—and a hell of a goddamned womern!

Hannie. I'd kick yer shins, and pull out yer hair. I'd blister you 'th my tongue ever couple of days. I'd cripple you—

Texas. I'd hate you 'f you didn't! [*Passionately*] Come on—go with me! Wouldn't see another womern but you. Wouldn't *think* of another womern but you.

Hannie. Look out now—!

Texas [*as before*]. You—you—all the time, day in, day out! When it got night, they'd be me and you, close together, d' you hear me? Me—and you! Like it ort to be! Like it was wrote down! Makes me dizzy!

Hannie [*breathless*]. Don't talk that-a-way—

Texas. You—in my arms! I'd make love to you! Learn you sump'n you never knowed about. Kiss you the way you never was kissed before—

Hannie [*responding, passionately*]. Kiss me, then—

Texas. Hannie!

[*He seizes her in his arms and kisses her*]

Hannie [*after a moment*]. My God!

[*She pushes him away*]

Texas [*rapturously, passionately, his eyes shut, swaying*]. I'm blind! Lightnin's struck! The world's ended! Kiss me!

Hannie [*blind herself*]. Whur air you?

[*She finds him. He kisses her, then holds her at arm's length*]

Texas. My God! The trees is smokin'! My feet's burnin'! Kiss me!

Hannie [*backing out of his arms*]. Go 'way, you wicked man! 'S too early in the mornin' fer this kind of talk! [*As TEXAS makes a move toward her*] Stay back there, now! 'F you tetch me, they'll be a murder!

Texas [*going toward her, ecstatically*]. I knowed you was lyin' about Buzzzey!

Hannie [*backed up against the steps*]. Anh, it ain't safe here! I'm goin' in the wagon—[*She starts up the steps*] You better not foller me, neither! [*She turns, tantalizingly*] If you do foller me—I won't be responsible!

Texas. Hannie!

[*The IKES pop up from behind a bush, grinning*]

The Ikes. Yanh, yanh! Hannie's got a feller! Hannie's got a feller!

Hannie [*coming down the steps, furiously*]. God damn it, I told you to find Pap! [*They pop back out of sight again, quickly*] Texas! Quick, we got to be movin' from here! They'll git you again.

Texas. I'd fergot all about it!

Hannie. I hadn't.

Texas. Well, am I goin' with you, er air you goin' with me?

Hannie. I can't run off and leave Pap.

Texas. No, I reckon not! That means I'm goin' 'th you and Pap, then. [*Whistles*] Holy Moses! Pap! You know whur Pap's at?

Hannie. Whur?

Texas. Last I seen of him he was in the courtroom. Him and Buzzzey both.

Hannie. The courtroom? Whut was Pap doin' there?

Texas. Lookin' fer you, I reckon.

Hannie. The damned old fool! Now I bet he's got hisse'f in trouble. Whut'm I gonna do, Texas?

Texas [*starting*]. I'll go back and see about him, quick!

Hannie. The marshal'll git you!

Texas. Naw, sir, not me! You got it all wrong! This time, I'm gonna git the marshal!

[*He starts out*]

Hannie. You mean it, Texas?

Texas [*turning*]. Did you mean whut was a-goin' on when them Ikes popped in

here jist now and ruint everthing? The way you looked at me and egged me on? Did you mean it—about bein' afearod to have me clost to you, or you wouldn't be responsible what happened?

Hannie. I couldn't make that up, could I?

Texas [*ecstatically*]. That's all I want to know, then! I'll drag Pap back here so quick he'll be winded fer life. Nen we'll all beat it from here, to God knows whur—and they'll be sump'n to make up songs about. I been waitin' fer this day!

[*He starts to go*]

[*The IKES run in again*]

The Ikes [*breathless*]. Hey, Hannie! Texas!

Red Ike. 'F we called Pap, mebbe he'd hear us and answer!

Black Ike. Bet he's jist a-hiding out some'eres! [*Calling loudly*] Pap! Oh—ho! Pap. Pa-a-ap!

Texas. Shet up, he cain't hear you!

Red Ike [*calling loudly*]. Pap Rader! Pap Rader! He-ey!

Hannie. He hain't here nowhur, I tell you!

Red Ike. Pa-a-ap! Ya-ay, Pap!

Hannie [*furiously*]. Texas knows whur he is, cain't you hear nuthin'?

[*Away off in the woods, there is an answering reply*]

Voice. Aye—aye—ah! I'm a-comin'!

Texas. Listen!

Hannie. Whut was that?

Texas [*to the IKES*]. Holler again.

Red Ike [*calling*]. Pa-ap! Hey, Pap!

[*They listen, breathless*]

Voice [*coming nearer*]. Yeah! I'm a-comin'!

Hannie [*jubilantly*]. Hit's Pap, all right. [*To the IKES*] Hitch up the team, quick! Put everthing in the wagon! Shake a leg! We're leavin' this place. [*The IKES dash out around the wagon*] Here, Texas, he's me pour out this warter, and put the kittle in the wagon!

[*She rushes over to the pot. TEXAS comes over*]

Texas [*banteringly, gaily*]. Git away from that kittle, you'll burn yerse'f! You're too little to lift it, anyway.

Hannie. Do it yerse'f, then!

Texas [*calling out to the IKES*]. Hurry up, you Ikes! Fasten them brithin' straps! Look out, the horses don't step on you!

Hannie. My goodness! my goodness!

[*She scurries about in absurd excitement and delight. TEXAS puts the kettle in the wagon*]

[*PAP runs in, breathless, his clothes and face and hands scratched by the briars*]

Pap [*panting for breath*]. Right of way fer the west-bound mail! Git outa my way, I cain't stop! [*He runs around and around*] Oh, there you air, Texas! Knowed you'd be here! Lay back yer years like a jack-rabbit, and skedaddle.

Hannie. Pap, you crazy, what's the matter?

Texas. Come on, Pap—we're bound fer the border!

[*PAP stops, puffing*]

Pap. They hain't a minute behint me, I tell you! I give 'em the slip. Buzzey—the marshal. Hurry up, don't stand there!

Hannie. Whut're you runnin' fer? 'D you see sump'n?

Pap. The marshal and Buzzey and another feller. Right on my heels! Beat it outa here, quick.

Texas. They comin' after me, is that it, Pap?

Pap [*nodding*]. And ever one 'th a shootin' arn a yard long!

Texas. Well, why'n't you say so in the first place? Come on! The Ikes is hitchin' up the team. We got everthing else—Don't stand there!

Pap. My, oh, my! I got to be on the move, too. I'm a crimernal myself now, like you. Yes, sir. They'll arrest us both if they ketch us again!

[*He seizes TEXAS by the arm and starts hurrying him along toward the wagon*]

Texas [*thoughtfully*]. Hey! I jist thought of sump'n! You come ahead to warn me, is that it, Pap?

Pap. That's the idy.

Texas. That's right nice of you, Pap.

Pap. Come on now, they hain't fur behind.

Texas. I ain't goin'.

Pap [*thunderstruck*]. You ain't goin'?

Hannie. Texas!

Pap. Well, Godamighty, whut're you up to now? Gonna give yerself up the way you done before, is that it?

Texas [*firmly*]. I ain't goin'.

Pap. Well, thunderation! And here I've run my hind legs off!

Texas. Listen—you been in enough trou-

ble a'ready on my account. They'll arrest you—fer comin' to warn me. I cain't have that, Pap. You and Hannie and the Ikes jump in the wagon and fly fer dear life. I'll stay here. That'll give you a chance to get away.

Hannie. You want us to leave you here, is that it?

Texas. This here law a-gittin' after me is happenin' entirely too reg'lar to suit me. Gittin' t'ard of it. I'll jine you up here by Sweetwater Crick, in a coupla days. Quick 's I c'n git there.

Hannie. Whut makes you so blamed sure you'll git there—with three men-a-comin' after you 'th shootin' arns? Whut're you aimin' to do?

Texas. I don't know whut I'll do, but I'll do sump'n—

Hannie. Thundermug! I won't have it. [*Decisively*] If they's gonna be any stayin', I'm gonna stay right here with you.

Texas. Hannie, you mean it? I don't think I'd ort to let you—

Pap. Hannie, now it tain't safe—they fellers might—

Hannie [*her eyes on TEXAS*]. I hain't a-gonna let him outa my sight, I tell you. They don't grow on trees. You and the Ikes shake yer tails, 'f you want to.

Pap [*insulted*]. I hain't a-gonna shake my tail, no sich of a thing.

Hannie. Well, looks like we're all a-stayin'. The Ikes won't budge 'thout me. Whut you gonna do, Texas? You hain't gonna give yerself up?

Texas [*sitting down thoughtfully by the fire*]. I hain't decided.

Hannie. Gonna fight 'em all bare-handed?

Texas. I might.

Hannie. Gonna shoot it out?

Texas. 'F I take a notion.

Hannie [*worried*]. You got yer pistol, hain't you?

Texas [*reaching for it*]. Yeah. Got my pistol—and this thing, too.

[*He draws the gavel out of his belt*]

Pap [*coming over and sitting down*]. Whut's that thing?

Texas. Don't you know? This thing represents the law. [*He drops it in the fire. He grins*] Now then. Seein' 's how we're jist a-waitin'—you might tell us whut happened, Pap. So we'll know whut to expect—

Pap [*rapidly*]. A plenty happened. After the marshal came to life again, Buzzey says he'd see to it, *personal*, that they got you, Texas. Take the marshal to whur you was at, and help put the handcuffs on you.

Texas. Well, that was nice of him.

Pap. And he give the marshal twenty-five dollars to help him make up his mind to say "Yes."

Texas. Good ole Buzzey!

Pap. So I give a dash around the blacksmith shop into a plum thicket, and here I am!

Texas. And then three—all broke out 'th shootin' arns—was right at yer heels, is that right?

Pap. I'd hate to tell you how clost! [*He looks round at the woods*]

Texas. Hey! I got a idy. We'll give 'em a welcomin' salute! [*He turns around with a grin*] You see that leaf—on the tip end of the top branch of that oak tree?

[*He points jubilantly, with suppressed excitement*]

Pap. That green un?

Texas. Yeah.

[*He pulls out his pistol, takes careful aim, and fires*]

Pap. Hit, by God!

Texas [*with a wide grin*]. Clipped it off clean! That ort to worry 'em quite a lot.

[*He puts his pistol back in the holster, and from here on, his air of amused, almost ecstatic confidence never leaves him. The IKES run in wildly*]

The IKes. Who's that a-shootin'?

[*They stop short*]

Black Ike. Why, 'f here ain't Pap! Howdy, Pap, thought you was dead!

Pap. Come on over here and I'll tell you sump'n. [*The IKES come over obediently, and sit down*] You know whut we're a-doin'?

Red Ike. No.

Pap. We're jist a-settin' here waitin' to git arrested. [*The IKES look baffled*] Yes, sir, that's it. We've all made up our minds that travelin' on the road ain't no fun. So we're gonna give it up, and go to house-keepin' in the Verdgree jail. Ain't that right, Hannie?

Hannie [*shortly*]. Shet up, I'm thinkin'.

Pap [*to the IKES*]. She says, "Yes." [*He grins*] Hannie and Texas here is crazy about

each other, 'd you know that? Ain't that so, Hannie?

Hannie. Well, for God's sake, Pap—

Pap [*to the IKES*]. Whut'd I tell you?

Texas [*with visionary delight*]. In half a hour, we'll cross Little Spunky, by noon we'll hit Tulsy, in five days we'll all be in Texas—

Pap. Hunh! In five minutes we'll all be dead.

Texas [*grinning at him*]. Suit yerself, Pap.

Pap [*petulantly*]. You take it awful light, I must say.

Texas [*visionary again, absorbed*]. Here we set—all hands idle—and a cyclone with shootin' pistols let loose after us. In them woods, walks the forces of the law, their teeth clamped and their heads not easy. But the roads we're goin' on don't end no-whurs—till we end 'em ourselves. And they's gonna be plenty of hell-let-loose—as well as settin' quiet in fence jambs—afore we do. Ain't that right, Hannie?

Hannie. Whutever you say, Texas.

Pap [*annoyed*]. Blamed if can make any one of you-uns out! You talk plumb silly to me.

Texas [*grinning*]. That's jist the way everbody else's talk sounds—to us, Pap!

[*Through the bushes at the back, appear BUZZEY, NEB, and the MARSHAL. They have tied the MARSHAL's white handkerchief on a stick, and BUZZEY is carrying it above his head, the others huddling close as if for protection*]

Buzzey. We—we—we hain't a-gonna hurt nobody—

Pap [*after a surprised stare*]. How's that?

Buzzey. I say—we hain't a-gonna hurt nobody.

Pap. Oh! [*To the others*] He haint a-gonna hurt nobody. Well, whut you got that white rag on a stick fer?

Buzzey. Tain't no white rag. It's the marshal's hankuchief.

Pap. Oh. That makes it different.

Buzzey. We didn't want nobody a-shootin' at us, 'cause we hain't a-gonna shoot at nobody.

Marshal [*interrupting*]. We come here peaceable—to talk things over.

Neb [*butting in*]. We heared a shot and we thought mebbe we better—

Marshal. Shet up, Neb! [*To PAP*] Is it all right to talk things over?

Pap. Why, talk till you git the lockjaw, fer all I keer. Only don't use no rough talk—'cause my daughter is here, and she hain't used to it—

Hannie [*impatiently*]. God damn it, Pap, shet up—

Marshal. How'd do, Mr. Texas?

Texas [*after a moment, looking at him*]. How'd do.

Marshal. You see how it is—we hain't a-meanin' harm to no one.

Texas. Yeah, I see how it is.

Marshal [*relieved*]. We hoped you'd do that.

Texas. Set down, why don't you?

Marshal. Might do that. [*They all sit down, BUZZEY first having stuck the stick with its white handkerchief in the ground*] Well, I—'s fine weather, ain't it?

Pap. Looks like rain.

Marshal. Yeah, looks like rain. We need it, though.

Pap. Always need rain.

Marshal. Yeah, always need it when we hain't got it. When it do start, it don't rain, it pours.

Pap. Pitchforks and nigger babies.

Marshal. Ever time. Well, we cain't complain.

Pap. We c'n complain—but that's all the good it does.

Marshal [*with a loud nervous laugh*]. Yeah, that's right. Ain't that right, Mr. Hale?

Buzzey [*joining in, nervously*]. Hee! Hee!

The Ikes [*bursting out*]. Haw! Haw!

[*They rock with hysterical excitement*]

Pap [*to the IKES*]. Goldurn it, that ain't no joke!

[*They subside*]

Marshal [*feeling that the ice is broken*]. Well, well. Reminds me of one time I was farmin' over by Tahlequah and it come a big hail storm in the night—

Texas [*breaking in*]. Is that whut you wanted to talk over, Mr. Marshal? 'D you come all the way here like a bat outa thunder to tell us about a hail storm?

Marshal. Why, jist a little friendly talk—

Texas. Friendly snappin' turtles! Whut'd you want, anyway?

Marshal [*jerking out a pistol*]. Put yer hands up! That's whut I want. [*He*

stands up, quickly, covering TEXAS with the pistol. NEB and BUZZEY jerk out pistols and cover TEXAS with them. The three back away a little so as to keep the whole group in sight] Put 'em up.

Texas [*lazily*]. My hands?

Marshal. And be quick about it!

Texas. I knowed they was a ketch to it.

[*He puts his hands up, casually, not the least bit perturbed*]

Pap. Now, goldurn it, you said you wasn't gonna hurt nobody!

Marshal. Shet up! And keep outa this.

Pap [*disgusted*]. White hankuchief on a stick, huh?

Marshal [*to TEXAS*]. Now I guess you'll come along peaceable, er git yerself riddled 'th bullets. Neb, take his gun away from him.

Texas [*casually*]. I don't think I'd come too clost, Neb, 'f I was you.

Marshal. Git it, Neb, I told you!

[*NEB advances cautiously*]

Texas [*with cool deadly meaning*]. Onet a feller tried to take a gun away from me, and I didn't want him to have it. They wouldn't no one bury him, the varmint. Laid on the ground till he rotted.

Neb [*anxiously*]. You got him covered, hain't you, Marshal?

Texas [*coolly, directly to NEB*]. How's yer cripples, Neb? Glad to see yer leg hain't broke. I'd take keer of myself 'f I was you. [*Fiercely*] Take keer of yerself, I said!

[*NEB scurries back out of reach*]

Marshal. God damn it, you blisterin' coward! Whut good air you?

Neb. My legs is a-painin' me turrible, Marshal. I hain't all here, cain't you see it?

Marshal. Christ! Mr. Hale, go and git that gun offa him.

Texas. Oh, Mr. Hale, 's I live and breathe! Come and shake hands 'th me, Buzzey.

Buzzey [*hesitantly*]. Why, I—you keep yer hands up in the air.

Texas. I jist wanted to say "Hello." Hain't saw you in so long.

Buzzey [*to the MARSHAL*]. You make him keep his hands up, Marshal.

Marshal. Git his gun, like I told you.

Buzzey [*worried*]. You got him covered, hain't you, Marshal?

[*He advances*]

Marshal. Yeah, and hurry up.

Texas. Come a little closter, Buzzey, and lemme make up fer lost time.

Buzzey. I hain't a-skeered of you.

Marshal. 'F you tetch Mr. Hale, I'll shoot and shoot quick.

Buzzey [worried]. You'll look out *whur you shoot*, won't you, Marshal?

Marshal. I won't miss whut I aim at.

Buzzey. Nen I'll shore take his gun from him—don't you worry about that!

Texas. Hannie, somebody's went and done me dirt, and I wonder if it hain't Buzzey. I wonder if it wouldn't be worth git-tin' shot jist to git even. And while I think of it, I bet it was *his* idy to come in here under a white flag and make out this was gonna be a nice quiet pie supper 'th love and kisses.

Buzzey [jeering]. It *was* my idy, Mr. Texas. When I heared that shot!

Texas. Well, all I c'n say at this important minute of my life, is this: To them that does dirt, dirt shall be done. Ain't that right, Hannie?

Hannie [her eyes blazing]. Dirt and a plenty!

Texas. Whut'll I do—set f'ar to him?

Hannie. He ain't worth it!

Texas. Want me to shoot him? Skin him alive? Tie him up to a tree and let the coyotes chew on him?

Hannie. Nuthin' like that! Don't you lift a finger, Texas!

Texas. What! And let him git away with his sneakin' onneriness?

Hannie. Naw, sir! He ain't gonna git away with *nuthin'*! [She hitches up a sleeve, turns toward BUZZEY, and speaks with slow and deadly deliberation] You c'n leave Buzzey to me.

[BUZZEY, who has advanced, takes a quick step backward]

Buzzey. Why, Hannie—why whutta you—?

Hannie [as before]. Come and take his gun off of him, Buzzey. Sich a nice gun! Whutta you standin' there fer?

Buzzey [frightened]. Hannie, I—well, fer land's sake, I ain't wantin' no gun!

Marshal [severely]. Go and git that gun!

Buzzey. N-Naw, sir! I woulden tetch it—'th a ten-foot pole!

Marshal [with outraged indignation]. Well, Christamighty! Skeered wall-eyed by a weak womern!

Buzzey. That womern hain't weak. I know her. I hain't a-gonna fool 'th her.

Marshal. Well! [With biting contempt] Seein' as how you've lost yer manhood—I reckon it's up to me. *My* business is to uphold the law, and I'm gonna do it. I ort to arrest you fer lyin' to me. Here I went and deputized you—give you a gun and everthing—and you go and lay down on me. Gimme that gun back!

Buzzey. Nanh, I'm afeared you'll shoot me!

Marshal [contemptuously]. I wouldn't spit on you.

Buzzey [relieved]. Here, then.

[He hands the pistol back. The MARSHAL puts it in his holster]

Marshal. Now then, Mr. Texas, I guess it's up to me to git that gun. Neb, keep yer gun on these others to see they don't interfere.

Neb. I guess mebbe I c'n do *that*, Mr. Marshal.

Texas [easily]. I'm shore sorry it had to be you, Mr. Marshal. You're the only white man in the whole shootin' match. But 'fore you take it, I wanta tell you sump'n. Nen you c'n have it.

Marshal. Well, make it quick.

Texas [carefully]. You know, I've made you a powerful sight of trouble.

Marshal. You damn right, you have!

Texas. Well, that's the way I am! Hain't it turrible! I'm a peaceable man enough, 'f people ud le' me alone. 'F they don't, why I beat up folks right and left and make nuthin' but trouble fer 'em. Git put in jail, git myself outa jail. Make marshals spend all their time a-tryin' to keep their hands on me. You know how a eel is, slippery and hard to handle? That's *me*. A slippery eel with a shootin' arn. Full of trouble. Cain raiser and Hell bender. And so on. Mr. Marshal, whut I'm gettin' at is this: if you take me back to Verdigrice again, whut does it git you?

Marshal [grimly]. I'll have you whur I want you.

Texas. Whur is that?

Marshal. Whur they put eels.

Texas. Whur is that?

Marshal. In jail.

Texas [grinning]. That don't make sense. They put eels in vinegar.

Marshal. Sense or no sense, it's jail fer *you*.

Texas [blandly]. I won't be there long, you ort to know that.

Marshal. We'll see about that.

Texas [with calculated guile]. Fu'thermore, I—I'm sorry to mention it—but *somebody might git hurt*. Never c'n tell when I git mad. [*To HANNIE, as if he'd just remembered it*] Hannie! You shore missed it! [*With delight*] Who'd you reckon I slugged in the jaw back there in the courtroom!

[*The MARSHAL involuntarily puts his hand to his jaw*]

Hannie [delighted]. The marshal!

Texas. Yes, sir—the law!

Hannie. Hard?

Texas. Sledge hammer!

Hannie. Worse'n a mule kick, I bet!

Texas. Two mules.

Hannie [with huge delight]. Wisht I'd a-been there! 'S turrible to miss *all* the purty sights! [*Struck with an idea*] Hey, but *Texas*! [*Indicating the MARSHAL*] Show me how you done it!

Texas [grinning]. Aw, he wouldn't like it.

Hannie. Go on, he wouldn't keer! Any-way—he wouldn't *know* nuthin'—after it happened.

Marshal [with offended dignity]. Will you two quit turnin' yer backs on me like I wasn't here?

Texas [grinning at the MARSHAL]. Beg yer pardon. I *did* hit you a whack on the jaw, though, I'm afeard.

Marshal. You damn right you did!

Texas. Well! Whurever I *am*, they's trouble. Follers right at my heels, jist like a shadder. *Me*—then *trouble*. Jist that close!

Marshal. I guess I'll take my chances on that.

Texas. All right, then. [*He stands up, belligerently*] Cart me off to yer old jail!

Marshal. I'll do that.

Texas [amused]. It don't make no difference to me. *Take me*! I have me a good time purt' near anywhur. The truth is, I was borned on the side of the road, and I like to stay there. [*Confidentially, glowingly, to HANNIE, ignoring the MARSHAL again*] I like to walk fur, and to cut up jake, and let my lungs out considerable.

Hannie [responding, oblivious of everybody else]. I know you. You like to stick

out yer hand, and tetch yand' side of a river.

Texas [as before]. Like to stand 'th my feet on a horse's rump and my head stuck up over a cloud! Like to walk on the hills that no one can locate!

Marshal [indignantly]. Jist ferget I'm here, why don't you!

Texas [unheeding]. Any kind of walls jist gits in my way sump'n turrible! [*He turns to the MARSHAL*] You see, I'm one kind of thing—and you and yer law is another'n. But go on—*take me*! Course—if I was a-runnin' things, I'd keep you and me separated.

Buzzey [breaking in, alarmed]. Look out, Mr. Marshal, he'll talk you out of it!

Marshal [angrily]. Well, I hain't noticed you a-doin' nuthin'! [*To TEXAS*] I ain't gonna let you go, that's all they is to it. I ain't goin' back to Verdigrée without you!

Texas [blandly]. 'D you have to go back to Verdigrée?

Marshal. Course I do!

Texas. Why is that?

Marshal. 'Cause I'm a marshal there, that's why!

Texas [turning to HANNIE]. Whyn't he give up marshalin'? I heard him say this mornin' he was gittin' mighty t'ard of it.

Hannie. Whut'd he do? Marshalin's a good job.

Texas. I've saw people that was better at it.

Hannie. Whut's the matter 'th his marshalin'?

Texas. He's too good a man to marshal. He ort to go back to farmin'. It tain't so excitin', but it's decenter. Nen he wouldn't have to go on associatin' 'th the crimernal classes—like me. Why, some day—you know whut'll happen to the marshal?

Hannie. Whut?

Texas [with tense exaggeration, visualizing it]. Some day, he'll start to arrest a feller—a mean un! Come up clost to him, and start to put the handcuffs on him. And that feller'll reach out—like a cat—like this, see?—and grab him! Claw him to ribbons! Tie his arms in a hard knot!

Hannie [catching his excitement]. Jump on him 'th hob-nails!

Texas. Break his legs!

Hannie. Cut off his years!

Texas. Crack his ribs! They'll be blood all over him like a stuck hog! Nen that feller'll slowly draw out a gun and shoot the marshal six times! [*Turning toward the MARSHAL*] Kill you dead, that's whut he'll do! Kill you dead!

Marshal [*in alarm, stepping back*]. You keep yore hands offa me!

Texas. You don't want me, Mr. Marshal. You don't want me.

Marshal [*baffled*]. No?

Texas [*throwing up his hands, ecstatically*]. There! I knowed you'd come to yer senses! Good old Marshal! Come on, folkses, the marshal says it's all right! Hey, you Ikes, come and help me with the team!

[*TEXAS and the IKES dash out around the wagon. HANNIE runs over and thumps the MARSHAL on the chest, delightedly*]

Marshal [*protesting, weakly*]. Here, here—I never said you could go! Here, you!

Buzzey [*furiously*]. God damn it, don't you let that crimernal go! I'll have the law on you!

Marshal [*turning on him fiercely*]. Shet up! Don't you go and tell me whut to do! I guess I know whut I can do—and can't do!

Buzzey. Hain't you gonna take him back?

Marshal [*fiercely*]. If I don't—that's my business, and you keep out of it, you hear? It's good riddance—a clear case of it—that's whut it is! [*Weakly, remembering his fright*] I ort to know!

Hannie [*turning on BUZZEY*]. You little trouble-makin' baboon! Come here 'th a white flag, will you, and try to sneak up on Texas that-a-way?

Buzzey. But Hannie—

Hannie [*relenting*]. Oh, I know. All on account of me, wasn't it? Damned 'f I don't feel sorry fer you, purt' near. Listen, Buzzey—I hain't yore kind, hain't you found that out by this time? You go and find yerself another womern.

[*She starts putting things in the wagon*]

Buzzey [*miserably*]. I—I don't want no other womern but you.

Hannie. Fiddlesticks! The woods is full of 'em. Sorry, Mr. Marshal, I gotta have that stool. A womern's a womern—'cept that some of 'em is plumb nice—and I hain't. You go and find you a nice womern, Buzzey—one that's house-broke.

Texas [*coming back in, jubilantly*]. Team's ready! Rarin' to step! Pile in, Hannie! Less'n you're goin home with Buzzey.

Hannie [*grinning, as she goes toward the wagon*]. I don't know him from Adam!

Texas [*looking into her eyes*]. Do you know me from Adam?

Hannie [*cryptically*]. No.

Texas. No?

Hannie [*smiling, with deep feeling*]. As fur as I'm concerned—you air Adam!

[*TEXAS lifts her into the wagon. PAP jumps in, also. The IKES dash in, ecstatically*]

The Ikes. Wild and reckless, borned in Texas!

[*They put the stepping boxes in the wagon*]

Buzzey [*mournfully*]. Hain't you a-goin' back with me, neither, Red—you and Black?

Red Ike [*brightly*]. Don't—know you.

Black Ike. Never seen you before in all of our borned days!

[*They snicker with delight and dash off. BUZZEY goes and sits down by the fire, weebegone*]

Texas [*about to get in the wagon*]. Good luck, Mr. Marshal! Keep outa trouble!

Marshal. You better beat it 'fore I change my mind.

Texas. Jist a minute!

[*He goes over and with the toe of his shoe kicks the charred gavel out of the fire. He picks it up, offering it to the MARSHAL*]

Marshal. Whut's that?

Texas [*with a wide grin*]. That's the law. Don't you reco'nize it? We hain't got a mite of use fer it. Take it. Course—it's kinda hot—and a little burnt on one end.

Marshal [*evasively*]. I—I got my hands full.

Texas. Back she goes, then! [*He throws it back in the fire, jumps in the wagon beside HANNIE, quickly. The IKES can be heard shouting excitedly to the team: "Whoa! Whoa, back!" The wagon backs a little, creaking and swaying*] Hey! Put that far out, will you, Buzzey? Good-bye, you all! I bet you wish you was us!

[*A whip cracks. The wagon plunges off into the woods. The IKES begin to*

shout jubilantly, tauntingly: "Wild and reckless, borned in Texas! Suckled by a bear!"—The hound yaps with excitement]

[The MARSHAL looks down the road

after them. A slow admiring grin comes over his face. He plucks his handkerchief off the stick and begins to wave]

THE END

THE INFERNAL MACHINE

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

BY JEAN COCTEAU

Translated from the French by CARL WILDMAN

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JEAN COCTEAU AND THE EXPERIMENTAL THEATER IN FRANCE

JEAN COCTEAU was born in a small village near Paris in 1891. Reasonably precocious as a youth (he printed his first volume of poems in 1909) he evaded the jinx usually associated with child prodigies to become one of the most thoroughly rounded men of art in contemporary society. By turns, he has worked hard and successfully at the writing of verse, plays, and novels, at choreography, at painting, at film direction, at criticism. And his success in such diverse fields of the theatre as circus, ballet, tragedy, pantomime, fantasy, and romance has given the lie to the ancient canard about the jack-of-all-trades. "Art must satisfy the Nine Muses," he once declared, and in his practice he has done his best to give such satisfaction.

His first writing was strongly influenced by French classical authors, but his introduction about 1914 to André Gide freed him from the compulsion to imitate and set him to seeking more personal methods of communication. Specifically, Cocteau embarked upon an ambitious program of rescuing the French theatre, at all costs, from the "literary" drama: that is to say, realism and the problem play. Literature, he felt, had completely captured the stage and turned her legitimate collaborators out of doors. The French theatre was the slave of pettifogging realism, rotten with literature. Plays could be read with as great pleasure as they could be seen. "A great literary masterpiece," he said, "is but a dictionary in disorder." And he decided that the theatre should provide, instead, the excitement of drama and the exhilaration of ritual. It became his intention to exploit the resources of the drama itself, ignoring the "new" form of literary drama in favor of the beauty which could exist only on the stage itself, on the boards.

To this end, to the re-creation of "pure theatre," he joined forces with Serge Diaghileff's Ballet Russe and the composer Erik Satie to produce *Parade* in 1917. From ballet, he turned even nearer to first principles with *Le Bœuf sur le Toit*, created for the Fratellini troupe of circus clowns in 1920. With such a start, it is hardly surprising that experiment has been the characteristic of his dramatic career, whether it be such revisions of Greek tragedy as *Antigone* (1922); romantic melodrama, *L'Aigle à deux Têtes* (1946); "farce," *Les Parents Terribles* (1939); or monologue, *La Voix Humaine* (1934). Throughout his career he has worked closely with specialists in other fields of art—the modern composers, Poulenc, Honegger, Stravinsky, Satie, Milhaud; painters, Picasso, Bérard; and actor-managers, Louis Jouvet, Charles Dullin.

It is perhaps necessary for the student to rescue Cocteau from his commentators and disciples, for he has become something of a cult. He has been called a dadaist, a surrealist, and a symbolist. Actually he is none of these with any consistency. For example, an early critic declared him to be a part of "The light cavalry of the modern revolt against romanticism," a statement which Cocteau has completely refuted with his exercise in romanticism, *L'Aigle à deux Têtes*. Quite simply, Cocteau's importance lies in his serious endeavor to extract the limit of effect from what is uniquely the art of the theatre, the art which involves actors, scenery, and *action*. He has attempted to de-emphasize both the suspense of "what happens next," the characteristic of narrative, and the color of imagery, the characteristic of poetry. Imagery, he feels, should be in the action of the play. As for action, he is concerned with depth, not breadth.

It was only natural that a man with such a theory of the theatre should turn to the familiar myths and legends of the Greeks, as he has in *The Infernal Machine*. Since the stories involve neither everyday problems nor surprise endings, and the audience would know, for example, what happened to Oedipus, there would be no "sweaty excitement" about the culmination of the play. With almost the detachment of the gods, therefore, the audience could relax and observe the process of the event—*how* it happened, rather than *what* happened next. To further his ends, he employs in *The Infernal Machine* a superhuman Voice to quell any curiosity the audience might have about the final fate of the hero.

In the play itself, apart from the choral pronouncements of the Voice, Cocteau uses symbols to reveal the characters and visions of his principal actors. It is to be noted

that these are, in the main, theatrical symbols, presented in the action or the staging of the play, not in its poetry. A particular kind of formal stage is called for, the colors of the set and the lighting are specified, and the few properties are heavy with significance. The result is a kind of psycho-analytical tragedy with the universal implications all too frequently absent from the realistic problem play. *The Infernal Machine* is a dramatization in terms of the contemporary theatre of the Oedipus complex treated as an aspect of humanity. The student should consider with greatest care the implications of the setting of Act Three; for instance, its relationship to the plot as a whole, and to the behavior of the actors in that particular scene. The elaboration of psycho-analytical symbolism in the first three acts gives the familiar tragedy of Act Four a painful and human meaning. It becomes a tragedy which the contemporary audience can share with the audience of some two thousand years ago. The play makes poignant the tragic aspects of our common nature, which is, perhaps, what Cocteau means when he declares, "I rehabilitate the commonplace."

The Infernal Machine was first produced at the Théâtre Louis Jouvet, Paris, April 10, 1934. In the cast were Jean-Pierre Aumont as Oedipus, Pierre Renoir as Tiresias, Jouvet as the Shepherd, Cocteau as the Voice, and Marthe Régnier as Jocasta. It was later produced in London, at the Gate Theatre in Dublin, and in America by Vassar, Harvard, and the New York Play Room Club.

CHARACTERS

1. THE VOICE
2. THE YOUNG SOLDIER
3. THE SOLDIER
4. THE CHIEF, *their captain*
5. JOCASTA, *the queen, widow of Laius*
6. TIRESIAS, *a soothsayer, nearly blind*
7. THE PHANTOM OF LAIUS, *the dead king*
8. THE SPHINX
9. ANUBIS, *Egyptian God of the Dead*
10. THE THEBAN MATRON
11. A LITTLE BOY
12. A LITTLE GIRL
13. OEDIPUS, *son of Laius*
14. CREON, *brother of Jocasta*
15. THE MESSENGER FROM CORINTH
16. THE SHEPHERD OF LAIUS
17. ANTIGONE, *daughter of Oedipus*

THE INFERNAL MACHINE

ACT ONE

THE PHANTOM OF LAIUS¹

The Voice. "He will kill his father. He will marry his mother." To thwart this oracle of Apollo, Jocasta, Queen of Thebes, leaves her son on the mountain-side with his feet pierced and bound. A shepherd of Corinth finds the nursling and carries it to Polybius. Polybius and Merope, king and queen of Corinth, were bemoaning a sterile marriage. The child, Oedipus or *Pierced-feet*, respected by bears and wolves, is to them a heaven-sent gift. They adopt him.

When a young man, Oedipus questions the oracle of Delphi.

The god speaks: *You will murder your father and marry your mother.* He must therefore fly from Polybius and Merope. The fear of parricide and incest drives him on towards his fate.

One evening, arriving at the cross-roads of Delphi and Daulis, he meets an escort. A horse jostles him; a quarrel starts; a servant threatens him; he replies with a blow from his stick. The blow misses the servant and kills the master. This dead man is Laius, the old king of Thebes. Parricide!

The escort, fearing an ambush, took to its heels. Oedipus, unsuspecting, passed on. Besides, he is young, enthusiastic; this accident is soon forgotten.

During one of his halts, he learns of the scourge of the Sphinx. The Sphinx, "the Winged Virgin," "the Singing Bitch," is killing off the young men of Thebes. This monster asks a riddle and kills those who do not guess it. Queen Jocasta, widow of Laius, offers her hand and her crown to the conqueror of the Sphinx.

Like the young Siegfried to come, Oedipus rushes on. He is consumed with curiosity and ambition. The meeting takes place. What was the nature of this meeting?

¹ The four scenes should be planted on a little platform in the center of the stage, surrounded by nocturnal curtains. The slope of the platform varies according to the requirements of the scenes. Besides the lighting of details, the four acts should be flooded in the livid mythical light of quicksilver.

Mystery. Be that as it may, Oedipus enters Thebes a conqueror, he marries the queen. Incest!

For the gods really to enjoy themselves, their victim must fall from a great height. Years come and go in prosperity. Two daughters and two sons complicate the monstrous union. The people love their king. But the plague suddenly descends upon them. The gods accuse an anonymous criminal of infecting the country and demand that he shall be driven out. From one discovery to another, and as if intoxicated by misfortune, Oedipus, in the end, finds himself up against the wall. The trap shuts. All becomes clear. With her red scarf, Jocasta hangs herself. With the golden brooch of the hanging woman, Oedipus puts out his eyes.

Spectator, this machine, you see here wound up to the full in such a way that the spring will slowly unwind the whole length of a human life, is one of the most perfect constructed by the infernal gods for the mathematical destruction of a mortal.

A patrol path round the ramparts of Thebes. High walls. A stormy night. Summer lightning. The din and bands of the popular district can be heard.

The Young Soldier. They're having a good time!

The Soldier. Trying to.

Young Soldier. Well, anyway, they dance all night.

Soldier. They can't sleep, so they dance.

Young Soldier. All the same, they're getting tight and going with women, and spending their nights in night clubs, while I'm tramping up and down with you. Well I, for one, can't stand it any longer! I can't stand it! I can't! D'you see? That's flat. I can't stand it any longer.

Soldier. Desert.

Young Soldier. Oh! no. I've made up my mind. I'm going to put my name down for the Sphinx.

Soldier. What for?

Young Soldier. What do you mean? Why, to do something, of course. To put

an end to this nerve-racking business and this ghastly inaction.

Soldier. Out of a stew into a funk.

Young Soldier. Funk?

Soldier. Yes, just that . . . funk. I've seen brighter and sturdier lads than you who got the wind up. Unless the gentleman wishes to down the Sphinx and draw the first prize.

Young Soldier. And why not, after all? The only man to come back alive from the Sphinx became an idiot, I know. But supposing what he gibbers is true. What if it is a riddle? What if I guess it. What . . .

Soldier. But, you poor ass, don't you realize that hundreds upon hundreds of chaps who've been to the stadium and college and everything have left their carcasses behind there, and you, a poor little second-class soldier like you wants to . . .

Young Soldier. I shall go! I shall, because I can't bear any longer counting the stones of this wall, hearing that band, and seeing your rotten mug, and . . .

[*He stamps*]

Soldier. That's the stuff, my hero! I was expecting this attack of nerves. I like that better. Now . . . Now . . . enough crying . . . Let's calm ourselves . . . there, there, there . . .

Young Soldier. I hate you!

[*The SOLDIER bangs his spear against the wall behind the YOUNG SOLDIER who becomes rigid*]

Soldier. What's up?

Young Soldier. Didn't you hear anything?

Soldier. No . . . where?

Young Soldier. Ah! . . . I seemed . . . I thought for a moment . . .

Soldier. You're like a sheet . . . What's the matter? Are you going to pass out?

Young Soldier. It's silly . . . I seemed to hear a knock. I thought it was him!

Soldier. The Sphinx?

Young Soldier. No, him, the ghost, the phantom, you know!

Soldier. The phantom? Our dear old phantom of Laius? And is that what turns your stomach over? Really!

Young Soldier. Sorry.

Soldier. You're sorry, old son of a gun? Don't be so silly! To start with, there's a good chance that our phantom will not appear again after last night's business. That's that. And besides, what are you

sorry about? Look at things squarely. We can hardly say this phantom has scared us. Oh! well . . . the first time perhaps . . . But, after that, eh? . . . He was a decent old phantom chap, almost a pal, a relief. Well, if the idea of this phantom makes you jumpy, it's because you're in a real state of nerves, like everybody in Thebes, rich or poor alike, except a few bug pots who make something out of everything. There's not much fun in war, but do you imagine it's amusing to fight an unknown enemy? We're beginning to get fed up with oracles, happy deaths and heroic mothers. Do you think I should pull your leg as I do if my nerves weren't on edge and do you think you'd burst into tears, and that lot over there'd get tight and dance? No, they would stay tucked securely in bed, and we'd be playing dice while waiting for friend phantom.

Young Soldier. I say . . .

Soldier. Well? . . .

Young Soldier. What d'you think it's like . . . the Sphinx?

Soldier. Oh! give the Sphinx a rest. If I knew what it was like I shouldn't be here doing guard-duty with you tonight.

Young Soldier. Some make out it's no bigger than a hare, and is timid, and has a sweet little woman's head. But I think it has a woman's head and breast, and sleeps with the young men.

Soldier. Oh, look here! Shut up and forget it!

Young Soldier. Perhaps it doesn't ask anything and doesn't even touch you. You meet it, look at it, and die of love.

Soldier. All we needed was for you to go and fall in love with the public scourge. After all, public scourge . . . between ourselves, do you know what I think about this public scourge? . . . It's a vampire! Yes, a common or garden vampire! Some old man who is hiding from the police, and somehow they don't manage to lay hands on him.

Young Soldier. A vampire with a woman's head?

Soldier. Oh! not him! Oh! no! A real old vampire with a beard and moustache, and a belly. He sucks your blood and that's how it is they bring corpses back to their families all with the same wound in the same place: the back of the neck! And

now, go and see for yourself if you're still keen.

Young Soldier. You say that . . .

Soldier. I say that . . . I say that . . . Hi! The chief.

[*They stand up to attention. The CHIEF enters and folds his arms*]

Chief. Easy! . . . Well, my lads . . . Is this where we see phantoms?

Soldier. Chief . . .

Chief. Silence! You will speak when I ask you. Which of you two has dared . . .

Young Soldier. It's me, chief.

Chief. Good lord! whose turn to speak is it? Are you going to keep quiet? I was asking: which of you two has dared to make a report touching the service, in a high place, without it passing through the accepted channels? Right over my head. Answer.

Soldier. It wasn't his fault, chief, he knew . . .

Chief. Was it you or he?

Young Soldier. Both of us, but I . . .

Chief. Silence! I want to know how the high priest came to hear of what happens at night at this post, while I myself heard nothing.

Young Soldier. It's my fault, chief, my fault. My comrade here didn't want to say anything about it. But I thought I ought to speak and, as this incident didn't concern the service . . . and, well, I told his uncle everything; because his uncle's wife is sister to one of the queen's linen-maids, and his brother-in-law is in Tiresias' temple.

Soldier. That's why I said it was my fault, chief.

Chief. All right! Don't burst my eardrums. So . . . this incident doesn't concern the service. Very good, oh! very good! . . . And it seems . . . this famous incident which doesn't concern the service is a ghost story?

Young Soldier. Yes, chief.

Chief. A ghost appeared to you one night when you were on sentry-duty, and this ghost said to you . . . Just what did this ghost say to you?

Young Soldier. He told us, chief, he was the spectre of King Laius, and he had tried to appear several times since his murder, and he begged us to find some way of warning Queen Jocasta and Tiresias with all speed.

Chief. With all speed. Fancy that!

What a nice old phantom! And . . . didn't you ask him, say, why you had the honour of this visit and why he doesn't appear directly before the queen or Tiresias?

Soldier. Yes, chief, I asked him, I did. His answer was that he wasn't free to put in an appearance anywhere, and that the ramparts were the most favourable spot for the people who had died violent deaths, because of the drains.

Chief. Drains?

Soldier. Yes, chief. He said drains, meaning the fumes you only find there.

Chief. 'Struth. A very learned spectre, and he doesn't hide his light under a bushel. Did he scare you much? And what did he look like? What was his face like? What clothes did he wear? Where did he stand, and what language did he speak? Are his visits long or short? Have you seen him on different occasions? Although this business doesn't concern the service, I must admit I am curious to learn from your lips a few details about the manners and customs of ghosts.

Young Soldier. We were scared the first night, chief, I admit. I ought to have said he appeared very suddenly, like a lamp lighting up, there in the thickness of the wall.

Soldier. We saw it together.

Young Soldier. It was hard to make out the face and the body; the mouth when it was open, was clearer, and a white tuft of his beard, and a large red stain, bright red, near the right ear. He spoke with difficulty and couldn't somehow manage to get out more than one sentence at a time. But you'd better ask my comrade here about that, chief. He explained to me how it was the poor man couldn't manage to get it over.

Soldier. Oh! you know, chief, it's nothing very difficult. He spent all his energy in the effort to appear, that is, in leaving his new shape and taking on the old, so that we could see him. That's the reason why each time he spoke a little better, he began to disappear, became transparent like, and you could see the wall through him.

Young Soldier. And as soon as he spoke badly you could see him very well. But you saw him badly as soon as he spoke well, and began saying the same thing over again. "Queen Jocasta. You must . . . you must . . . Queen . . . Queen . . . Queen Jocasta

... You must ... You must warn the queen ... You must warn Queen Jocasta ... I ask you, gentlemen, I ask you, I ... I ... Gentlemen ... I ask ... you must ... you must ... I ask you, gentlemen, to warn ... I ask you ... The queen ... Queen Jocasta ... to warn, gentlemen, to warn ... Gentlemen ... Gentlemen ... That's how he went on.

Soldier. And you could see he was afraid of disappearing before he'd said all his words right to the end.

Young Soldier. And see here, listen a mo', d'you remember? Every time the same business. The red stain went last. Just like a ship's light on the wall, chief.

Soldier. The whole business was over in a second!

Young Soldier. He has appeared in the same place five times, every night, a little before dawn.

Soldier. But, last night, which was unlike the others, we ... well, we had a bit of a dust-up, and my comrade here decided to tell the royal house everything.

Chief. Well! Well! And how was this night "unlike the others," which, if I'm not mistaken, caused a dispute between you ... ?

Soldier. It was like this, chief ... You know, guard-duty isn't exactly all beer and skittles.

Young Soldier. So really we were waiting for the phantom.

Soldier. We betted, saying:

Young Soldier. Will come ...

Soldier. Won't ...

Young Soldier. Will come ...

Soldier. Won't ... and it may seem a funny thing to say, but it was a comfort to see him.

Young Soldier. A habit, as you might say.

Soldier. We ended by imagining we saw him when he wasn't there. We'd say to each other: "It's moving! The wall is lighting up. Don't you see anything? No. But you must do. Over there, I tell you ... The wall isn't the same. Don't you see, look! look!"

Young Soldier. And we looked and stared our eyes out. We dared not move.

Soldier. We watched for the least change.

Young Soldier. And when, at last, it came, we could breathe again, and weren't the least bit afraid.

Soldier. The other night, we watched and watched, and stared ourselves nearly blind; we thought he'd not show up, when he began to come stealthily ... not at all quickly like on the first nights. And once he was visible, he changed his sentences and told us as well as he could that something fearful had happened, a thing of death which he couldn't explain to the living. He spoke of places where he could go and places where he couldn't go, and that he had been where he shouldn't and knew a secret which he shouldn't know, and that he would be discovered and punished, and afterwards he wouldn't be allowed to appear, he wouldn't be able to appear any more. [Solemn voice] "I shall die my last death," he said, "and it will be finished, finished. You see, gentlemen, there is not a moment to lose. Run! Warn the queen! Find Tiresias! Gentlemen! Gentlemen! have pity! ... " He was begging away and day was breaking. And there he stuck!

Young Soldier. Suddenly we thought he'd go mad.

Soldier. We understood from sentences without beginning or end that he had left his post, you know, ... didn't know how to disappear, and was lost. We saw him going through the same performance to disappear as to appear, and he couldn't manage it. So then he asked us to insult him, because, he said, insulting ghosts is the way to make them go. The silliest thing about it was that we hadn't the guts to do it. The more he repeated: "Come on! young men, insult me! Let yourselves go, do your best ... Oh, come on!"—the more idiotic we looked.

Young Soldier. And the less we found to say! ...

Soldier. Yes, that is the limit! And yet, it's not for lack of blasting the chiefs.

Chief. Very nice of you, gentlemen, I'm sure! Thank you for the chiefs.

Soldier. Oh! I didn't mean that, chief. ... I meant ... I meant the princes, crowned heads, ministers, the government, what ... the powers that be. We had even chatted about injustices ... But the king was such a good old phantom, poor King Laius, that the swear-words wouldn't come. He was urging us on and we were dithering: "Go on then! Hop it, you son of a bitch!" In short, we gave him bouquets!

Young Soldier. Because, you see, chief:

son of a bitch is a friendly way of speaking among soldiers.

Chief. It's as well to know.

Soldier. Go on! Go on then! . . . son of a . . . you old . . . Poor phantom! He hung there between life and death and he was outside himself with fear because of the cocks and the sun. When, all of a sudden, we saw the wall become the wall again, and the red stain go out. We were dog tired.

Young Soldier. It was after that night that I decided to speak to his uncle as he refused to speak himself.

Chief. Your phantom doesn't seem to be very punctual.

Soldier. Oh! chief, you know he may not show himself again.

Chief. I am in his way, no doubt.

Soldier. No, chief. But after last night . . .

Chief. But I understand from what you say that your phantom is very polite. He will appear, I'm quite sure. In the first place, the politeness of kings is punctuality, and the politeness of phantoms consists in taking on human form according to your ingenious theory.

Soldier. Possibly, chief, but it's also possible that with phantoms there are no more kings, and they may mistake a century for a minute. So if the phantom appears in a thousand years instead of this evening . . .

Chief. You're a clever sort of chap, but patience has its limits. I tell you this phantom will appear. I tell you my presence is upsetting him, and I tell you that no one outside the service must pass along this sentry path.

Soldier. Yes, chief.

Chief [in an outburst]. So, phantom or no phantom, I order you to stop the first person who turns up unless he gives the password, got it?

Soldier. Yes, chief.

Chief. And don't forget to patrol. That's all!

[The two SOLDIERS stand stiffly at shoulder-arms]

Chief [false exit]. Don't try any clever tricks! I've got my eye on you.

[He disappears. Long silence]

Soldier. That's that.

Young Soldier. He thought we were trying to pull his leg.

Soldier. Oh, no, my friend! He thought someone was trying to pull our legs.

Young Soldier. Ours?

Soldier. Yes, my friend. I get to know lots of things through my uncle. The queen is nice, but at bottom she isn't liked; they find her . . . [He strikes his head] They say she is eccentric and has a foreign accent, and is under the influence of Tiresias. This Tiresias advises the queen to do everything that will harm her. Do this . . . and do that. . . . She tells him her dreams, and asks him if she ought to get up right foot or left foot first; he leads her by the nose and licks her brother's boots, and plots with him against the sister. They are a low lot there. I wouldn't mind betting the chief thought the phantom was from the same source as the Sphinx. A priest's trick to attract Jocasta and make her believe anything they want.

Young Soldier. No?

Soldier. Pretty flabbergasting, eh? But that's how it is. . . . [In a very low voice] As for me, I believe in the phantom, take it from me. But, for that very reason and because they don't believe in it, I advise you to keep your mouth shut. You've already succeeded in making a fine hash of things. Take down this report: "Has given proof of an intelligence well above his rank . . ."

Young Soldier. Still, if our king . . .

Soldier. Our king! . . . Our king! . . . Half a mo'! . . . A dead king isn't a living king. It's like this, if King Laius were living, well, between ourselves, he would manage on his own and wouldn't come looking for you to do his errands in town.

[They move off towards the right by the patrol path]

The Voice of Jocasta [at the bottom of the steps. She has a very strong accent: the international accent of royalty]. Still another flight! I hate steps! Why all these steps? We can see nothing! Where are we?

The Voice of Tiresias. But, Madam, you know what I think of this escapade, and I didn't . . .

Voice of Jocasta. Stop it, Zizi. You only open your mouth to say silly things. This is not the time for moral lessons.

Voice of Tiresias. You should have taken another guide. I am nearly blind.

Voice of Jocasta. What is the use of being a soothsayer, I wonder! Why, you don't even know where the steps are. I

shall break my leg! It will be your fault, Zizi, your fault, as usual.

Tiresias. My fleshly eyes have gone out to the advantage of an inner eye which has other uses than counting steps.

Jocasta. And now, he's cross all over his eye! There! There! We love you, Zizi; but these flights of steps upset me so. We had to come, Zizi, we simply had to!

Tiresias. Madam . . .

Jocasta. Don't be obstinate. I had no idea there were all these wretched steps. I am going to go up backwards. You will steady me. Don't be afraid. I am leading you. But if I looked at the steps, I should fall. Take my hands. Forward!

[*They appear on the set*]

There . . . there . . . there . . . four, five, six, seven . . .

[*Jocasta arrives on the platform and moves to the right. Tiresias treads on the end of her scarf. She utters a cry*]

Tiresias. What is it?

Jocasta. It's your foot, Zizi! You're walking on my scarf.

Tiresias. Forgive me . . .

Jocasta. Ah! he's cross! But it isn't you I'm annoyed with, it's the scarf! I am surrounded by objects which hate me! All day long this scarf is strangling me. At one time it catches in the branches, at another, it gets wound on the hub of a carriage, another time you tread on it. It's a positive fact. I am afraid of it, but I dare not be separated from it! Awful! It will be the death of me.

Tiresias. Look what a state your nerves are in.

Jocasta. And what is the use of your third eye, I should like to know? Have you found the Sphinx? Have you found the murderers of Laius? Have you calmed the people? Guards are stationed at my door, and I am left with things that hate me, that want my death!

Tiresias. From mere hearsay . . .

Jocasta. I feel things. I feel things better than all of you! [*She puts her hand on her belly*] I feel them there! Has every stone been turned to discover the murderers of Laius?

Tiresias. Madam knows very well the Sphinx made further searches impossible.

Jocasta. Well, I for one don't care a jot about yours fowls' entrails . . . I feel, there . . . that Laius is suffering and wants

to complain. I am determined to get to the bottom of this story, and to hear this young guard for myself; and I shall hear him. I am your queen, Tiresias, don't you forget it.

Tiresias. My dear child, you must try and understand a poor blind man who adores you, watches over you, and wishes you were sleeping in your room instead of running after a shadow on the ramparts.

Jocasta [*with mystery*] I do not sleep.

Tiresias. You don't sleep?

Jocasta. No, Zizi, I don't sleep. The Sphinx and the murder of Laius have put my nerves all on edge. You were right there; even better than that, if I fall asleep for so much as a minute I have a dream, one dream only, and I am ill for the whole day.

Tiresias. Isn't it my business to interpret dreams? . . .

Jocasta. The place of the dream is rather like this platform, so I'll tell you. I am standing in the night, cradling a kind of nursling. Suddenly, this nursling becomes a sticky paste which runs through my fingers. I shriek and try to throw this paste away, but . . . Oh! Zizi . . . if only you knew, it's foul . . . This thing, this paste stays hanging on to me, and when I think I'm free of it, the paste flies back and strikes me across the face. And this paste is living. It has a kind of mouth which fixes itself on mine. And it creeps everywhere, it feels after my belly, and my thighs. How beastly!

Tiresias. Calm yourself.

Jocasta. I don't want to sleep any more, Zizi . . . I don't want to sleep any more. Listen to that music. Where is it? They don't sleep either. It's lucky for them they have that music. They are afraid, Zizi . . . and rightly. They must dream horrible things and they don't want to sleep. And while I think of it, why this music? Why is it allowed? Do I have music to keep me from sleeping? I didn't know these places stayed open all night. How is it there is this scandal, Zizi? Creon must send out orders! This music must be stopped. This scandal must stop at once.

Tiresias. Madam, I implore you to calm yourself and to give up this idea. You're beside yourself for lack of sleep. We have authorized these bands so that the people don't become demoralized, to keep up their courage. There would be crimes . . . and

worse than that if there were no dancing in the working-class district.

Jocasta. Do I dance?

Tiresias. That's different. You are in mourning for Laius.

Jocasta. So are they all, Zizi. All of them! Every one! And yet they can dance and I can't. It's too unfair . . . I shall . . .

Tiresias. Some one coming, Madam.

Jocasta. I say, Zizi, I'm shaking. I have come out with all my jewels.

Tiresias. There's nothing to fear. You won't meet prowlers on the patrol path. It must be the guards.

Jocasta. Perhaps the soldier I am looking for?

Tiresias. Don't move. We'll find out.

[*The SOLDIERS enter. They see JOCASTA and TIRESIAS*]

Young Soldier. Steady, looks like somebody.

Soldier. Where have you sprung from? [*Aloud*] Who goes there?

Tiresias [*to the QUEEN*]. We are going to get into hot water. [*Aloud*] Listen, my good men . . .

Young Soldier. Password.

Tiresias. You see, Madam, we ought to have the password. You're getting us into an awful mess.

Jocasta. Password? Why? What password? How silly, Zizi. I shall go and speak to him myself.

Tiresias. Madam, I implore you. They have instructions. These guards might not recognize you, nor believe me. It's very dangerous.

Jocasta. How romantic you are! You see dramas everywhere.

Soldier. They're whispering together. Perhaps they will jump out on us.

Tiresias [*to the SOLDIERS*]. You have nothing to fear. I am old and nearly blind. Let me explain my presence on these ramparts, and the presence of the person who accompanies me.

Soldier. No speeches. The password!

Tiresias. One moment. Just a moment. Listen, my good men, have you seen any gold coins?

Soldier. Attempted bribery.

[*He goes towards the right to guard the patrol path and leaves the YOUNG SOLDIER opposite TIRESIAS*]

Tiresias. You're wrong. I meant: have

you seen the queen's portrait on a gold coin?

Young Soldier. Yes!

Tiresias [*gets out of the way and shows the QUEEN, who is counting the stars, in profile*]. And . . . don't you recognize . . . ?

Young Soldier. I don't see the connexion you mean between the queen, who is quite young, and this matron.

Jocasta. What does he say?

Tiresias. He says he finds Madam very young to be the queen . . .

Jocasta. He's entertaining!

Tiresias [*to the SOLDIER*]. Fetch your chief.

Soldier. Not necessary. I have orders. Clear off! look sharp!

Tiresias. You'll learn of this!

Jocasta. Zizi, what is it now? What does he say?

[*The CHIEF enters*]

Chief. What's this?

Young Soldier. Chief! Two people here are wandering about without the password.

Chief [*going towards TIRESIAS*]. Who are you? [*He suddenly recognizes TIRESIAS*] My lord! [*He bows*] How can I ever apologize enough?

Tiresias. Phew! Thanks, Captain. I thought this young warrior was going to run us through.

Chief. How can you forgive me? [*To the YOUNG SOLDIER*] Idiot! Leave us.

[*The YOUNG SOLDIER goes to his comrade on the extreme right*]

Soldier [*to the YOUNG SOLDIER*]. What a brick!

Tiresias. Don't scold him! He was obeying orders. . . .

Chief. Such a visit . . . in such a place! What can I do for you, my lord?

Tiresias [*standing back to show the QUEEN*]. Her majesty!

[*The CHIEF starts back*]

Chief [*bows at a respectful distance*]. Madam! . . .

Jocasta. No ceremony, please! I should like to know which guard saw the phantom?

Chief. The clumsy young oaf who allowed himself to ill-use my lord Tiresias, and if Madam . . .

Jocasta. See, Zizi. What luck! I was right in coming. . . . [*To the CHIEF*] Tell him to approach.

The Chief [*to TIRESIAS*]. My lord. J

don't know if the queen fully realizes that this young soldier would explain himself better through the medium of his chief; and that, if he speaks alone, Her Majesty risks . . .

Jocasta. What now, Zizi? . . .

Tiresias. The chief was pointing out to me that he is used to the men and he might serve as a kind of interpreter.

Jocasta. Send the chief away! Has the boy a tongue, or not? Let him come near.

Tiresias [aside to the CHIEF]. Don't insist, the queen is overwrought. . . .

Chief. Very well . . . [*He goes to his SOLDIERS. To the YOUNG SOLDIER*] The queen wants to speak to you. And control your tongue. I'll pay you out for this, young fellow-me-lad.

Jocasta. Come here!

[*The CHIEF pushes the YOUNG SOLDIER forward*]

Chief. Go along then! Go on, booby, forward. You won't be eaten. Excuse him, Your Majesty. Our boys are scarcely familiar with court ways.

Jocasta. Ask that man to leave us alone with the soldier.

Tiresias. But, Madam . . .

Jocasta. And no but-Madams . . . If this Captain stays a moment longer, I shall kick him.

Tiresias. Listen, chief. [*He leads him aside*] The queen wants to be alone with the guard who has seen something. She has whims. She might become displeased with you and I couldn't do anything about it.

Chief. Right. I'll leave you. . . . If I stayed it was because . . . well . . . I don't mean to give you advice, my lord . . . But, between you and me, be on your guard about this phantom story. [*He bows*] My lord. . . . [*A long salute to the QUEEN. He passes near the SOLDIER*] Hi! The queen wishes to stay alone with your comrade.

Jocasta. Who is the other soldier? Has he seen the phantom?

Young Soldier. Yes, Your Majesty, we were on guard-duty together.

Jocasta. Then let him stop. Let him stay there! I'll call him if I want him. Good evening, Captain, you are free.

Chief [to the SOLDIER]. We'll have this out later!

[*He goes out*]

Tiresias [to the QUEEN]. You have mortally offended that Captain.

Jocasta. About time too! Generally it's the men who are mortally offended and never the chiefs. [*To the YOUNG SOLDIER*] How old are you?

Young Soldier. Nineteen.

Jocasta. Exactly his age! He would be his age. . . . He looks splendid! Come nearer. Look, Zizi, what muscles! I adore knees. You can tell the breed by the knees. He would look like that too. . . . Isn't he fine, Zizi. Feel these biceps, like iron. . . .

Tiresias. I am sorry, Madam, but you know. . . . I'm no authority. I can scarcely see what they're like.

Jocasta. Then feel. . . . Test them. Thighs like a horse! He steps away! Don't be afraid. . . . The old grandpa is blind. Heaven knows what he's imagining, poor lad. He's quite red! He's adorable! And nineteen!

Young Soldier. Yes, Your Majesty!

Jocasta [mocking him]. Yes, Your Majesty! Isn't he just too delicious? Ah! what a shame! Perhaps he doesn't even know he's handsome. [*As one speaks to a child*] Well, . . . did you see the phantom?

Young Soldier. Yes, Your Majesty!

Jocasta. The phantom of King Laius?

Young Soldier. Yes, Your Majesty! The king told us he was the king.

Jocasta. Zizi . . . what do you know with all your fowls and stars? Listen to this boy. . . . And what did the king say?

Tiresias [leading the QUEEN away]. Madam! Be careful, these young people are hotheaded, credulous . . . pushful. . . . Be on your guard. Are you certain this boy has seen the phantom, and, even if he has seen it, is it really the phantom of your husband?

Jocasta. Gods! How unbearable you are! Unbearable and a spoilsport. Every time you come and break the spell and you stop miracles with your intelligence and incredulity. Please, let me question this boy on my own. You can preach afterwards. [*To the YOUNG SOLDIER*] Listen. . . .

Young Soldier. Your Majesty! . . .

Jocasta [to TIRESIAS]. I'll find out straight away whether he has seen Laius. [*To the YOUNG SOLDIER*] How did he speak?

Young Soldier. He spoke quickly and a lot, Your Majesty, ever such a lot, and he

got mixed up, and he didn't manage to say what he wanted to. .

Jocasta. That's he! Poor dear! But why on these ramparts? The stench. . .

Young Soldier. That's it, Your Majesty. . . The phantom said it was because of the swamps and the rising fumes that he could appear.

Jocasta. How interesting! Tiresias, you would never learn that from your birds. And what did he say?

Tiresias. Madam, Madam, you must at least question him with some order. You'll muddle this youngster's head completely.

Jocasta. Quite right, Zizi, quite right. [To the YOUNG SOLDIER] What was he like? How did you see him?

Young Soldier. In the wall, Your Majesty. A sort of transparent statue, as you might say. You can see the beard most clearly, and the black hole of the mouth as it speaks, and a red stain on the temple, bright red.

Jocasta. That's blood!

Young Soldier. Fancy! We didn't think of that.

Jocasta. It's a wound! How dreadful! [LAIUS appears] And what did he say? Did you understand anything?

Young Soldier. It wasn't easy, Your Majesty. My comrade noticed that he had to make a big effort to appear, and each time he made an effort to express himself clearly, he disappeared; then he was puzzled as to how to set about it.

Jocasta. Poor dear!

The Phantom. Jocasta! Jocasta! My wife! Jocasta!

[They neither hear nor see him during the whole of the scene]

Tiresias [addressing the SOLDIER]. And were you not able to grasp anything intelligible?

Phantom. Jocasta!

Soldier. Well, yes, my lord. We understood he wanted to warn you of a danger, put you on your guard, both the queen and you, but that's all. The last time he explained he knew some secrets he ought not to have known, and if he was discovered, he would not be able to appear again.

Phantom. Jocasta! Tiresias! Can't you see me? Can't you hear me?

Jocasta. And didn't he say anything else? Didn't he say anything particular?

Soldier. Ah, well, Your Majesty! Per-

haps he didn't want to say anything particular in our presence. He was asking for you. That is why my comrade tried to inform you.

Jocasta. Dear boys! And I have come. I knew very well. I felt it there! You see, Zizi, with all your doubts. And tell us, young soldier, where the spectre appeared. I want to touch the spot.

Phantom. Look at me! Listen to me, Jocasta! Guards, you always saw me before. Why not see me now? It's a torment! Jocasta! Jocasta!

[While these words are being uttered, the SOLDIER goes to the place where the PHANTOM is. He touches it with his hand]

Soldier. There. [He strikes the wall] There, in the wall.

Young Soldier. Or in front of the wall. It was difficult to make out.

Jocasta. But why doesn't he appear tonight? Do you think he will still be able to appear?

Phantom. Jocasta! Jocasta! Jocasta!

Soldier. I am sorry, Madam, I don't think so, after what happened last night. I'm afraid there may have been a bit of a dust-up, Your Majesty may be too late.

Jocasta. What a shame! Always too late. Zizi, I am always the last person in the whole kingdom to be informed. Think of the time that has been wasted with your fowls and oracles! We ought to have run, to have guessed. We shall learn absolutely nothing! And there will be disasters. And it will be your fault, Zizi, your fault, as usual.

Tiresias. Madam, the queen is speaking in front of these men.

Jocasta. Yes, I am speaking in front of these men! I suppose I ought to restrain myself? When King Laius, the dead King Laius, has spoken in front of these men. But he has not spoken to you, Zizi, nor to Creon. He hasn't been to the temple to show himself. He showed himself on the patrol path to these men, to this boy of nineteen who is so handsome and looks like . . .

Tiresias. I implore you . . .

Jocasta. Yes, I am overwrought, you must try to understand. These dangers, this spectre, this music, this pestilential smell. . . And there's a storm about. I can

feel it in my shoulder. I am stifling, Zizi, stifling.

Phantom. Jocasta! Jocasta!

Jocasta. I think I hear my name. Didn't you hear anything?

Tiresias. My poor lamb. You're worn out. Day is breaking. You are dreaming where you stand. Are you even sure this phantom business hasn't come from the fatigue of these young men on the watch who force themselves not to sleep and live in this depressing, swampy atmosphere?

Phantom. Jocasta! For pity's sake, listen to me! Look at me! Gentlemen, you are kind. Keep the queen. *Tiresias!* *Tiresias!*

Tiresias [to the YOUNG SOLDIER]. Step aside a moment, I want to speak to the queen.

[The YOUNG SOLDIER goes to his comrades]

The Soldier. Well, old son! You've clicked! She's fallen for it! Petted by the queen, eh!

Young Soldier. Look here! . . .

Soldier. You're made for life. Don't forget your pals.

Tiresias. . . . Listen! Cockcrow. The phantom will not return. Let us go home.

Jocasta. Did you see how handsome he is?

Tiresias. Don't revive those sad things, my lamb. If you had a son . . .

Jocasta. If I had a son, he would be handsome, brave, he would guess the riddle and kill the Sphinx. He would return victor.

Tiresias. And you would go without a husband.

Jocasta. Little boys always say: "I want to become a man so that I can marry mother." It's not such a bad idea, you know, *Tiresias*. Is there a sweeter union, a union that is sweeter and more cruel, and prouder, than that couple: a son and a young mother? Listen, *Zizi*, just now, when I touched that young guard, Heaven alone knows what he must have thought, the poor lad, and I myself nearly fainted. He would be nineteen, *Tiresias*, nineteen! The same age as this soldier. Can we be sure *Laius* did not appear to him because of this likeness?

[Cockcrows]

Phantom. Jocasta! Jocasta! Jocasta! *Tiresias!* Jocasta!

Tiresias [to the SOLDIERS]. My friends, do you think it is any use waiting?

Phantom. For pity's sake!

Soldier. Frankly, no, my lord. The cocks are crowing. He will not appear now.

Phantom. Gentlemen! Mercy! Am I invisible? Can't you hear me?

Jocasta. Come along! I will be obedient. But I am very glad I questioned the boy. You must find out his name and where he lives. *[She goes towards the steps]* I had forgotten these steps, *Zizi!* . . . That band is making me ill. Listen, we can go back through the higher town by the little streets and we can visit the night clubs.

Tiresias. Madam, you don't mean it.

Jocasta. Oh! Now he's beginning again! He'll send me simply raving! Mad and off my head. I've got my veils on, *Zizi*, how do you expect I should be recognized?

Tiresias. My child, you said yourself you have come out wearing all your jewels. Your brooch alone has pearls as large as an egg.

Jocasta. I am a martyr! Others can laugh and dance and amuse themselves. Do you imagine I am going to leave this brooch at the palace where it simply strikes everybody's eye? Call the guard. Tell him to help me down these steps. And you can follow us.

Tiresias. But, Madam, since the presence of this young man affects you . . .

Jocasta. He is young and strong. He will help me, and I shan't break my neck. Obey your queen once, at least.

Tiresias. Hi! . . . No, he. . . . Yes, you . . . Help the queen down the steps.

Soldier. You see, old man!

Young Soldier [approaching]. Yes, my lord.

Phantom. Jocasta! Jocasta! Jocasta!

Jocasta. He's nervous! And flights of steps hate me. Steps, hooks, and scarves. Oh! yes, they do, they hate me! They're after my death. *[A cry]* Ho!

Young Soldier. Has the queen hurt herself?

Tiresias. No, silly! Your foot! Your foot!

Young Soldier. What foot?

Tiresias. Your foot on the end of the scarf. You nearly strangled the queen.

Young Soldier. Ye gods!

Jocasta. *Zizi*, you are utterly ridiculous. Poor darling. There you go calling him a

murderer because he walks, as you did, on this scarf. Don't upset yourself, my boy. My lord is absurd. He never misses an opportunity of hurting people's feelings.

Tiresias. But, Madam, . . .

Jocasta. You are the one who is clumsy. Come along. Thank you, my boy. Send your name and address to the temple. One, two, three, four . . . Marvellous! Zizi! Do you see how well I'm getting down. Eleven, twelve. . . . Zizi, are you following? Two more steps. [*To the SOLDIER*] Thank you. I can manage now. Help grandpa!

[*Jocasta disappears left, with Tiresias. Cocks are heard*]

Voice of Jocasta. Through your fault, I shall never know what my poor Laius wanted.

Phantom. Jocasta!

Voice of Tiresias. That story is all very vague.

Voice of Jocasta. What? Very vague? What do you mean, vague? It's you who are vague with your third eye. That boy knows what he has seen, and he has seen the king. Have you seen the king?

Voice of Tiresias. But . . .

Voice of Jocasta. Have you seen him? . . . No. . . . Well . . . It's amazing. . . . it's like . . .

[*The voices die away*]

Phantom. Jocasta! Tiresias! Have pity!

[*The two SOLDIERS turn to each other and see the PHANTOM*]

The Two Soldiers. Oh! the spectre!

Phantom. Gentlemen, at last! I am saved! I kept calling, begging. . . .

Soldier. You were there?

Phantom. During the whole of your talk with the queen and Tiresias. Then why was I invisible?

Young Soldier. I'll run and fetch them!

Soldier. Halt!

Phantom. What? You stop him?

Young Soldier. Let me go . . .

Soldier. When the joiner comes the chair stops wobbling; when you get to the shoemaker, your sandal stops hurting you; when you get to the doctor, you no longer feel the pain. Fetch them! They would only have to arrive to make the phantom disappear.

Phantom. Alas! Do these simple souls then know what the priests cannot divine?

Young Soldier. I shall go.

Phantom. Too late. . . . Stay. It is too late. I am discovered. They are coming; they are going to take me. Ah! they're here! Help! Help! Quick! Tell the queen a young man is approaching Thebes, and on no account . . . No! No! Mercy! Mercy! They've got me! Help! Ended! I . . . I . . . Mercy . . . I . . . I . . .

[*Long silence. The two SOLDIERS, back to the audience, contemplate endlessly the place in the wall where the PHANTOM disappeared*]

Soldier. Not so gay!

Young Soldier. No!

Soldier. These things are beyond us, old man.

Young Soldier. But what is clear is that, in spite of death, that fellow wanted, at all costs, to warn his wife of a danger which is threatening her. My duty is to overtake the queen and the high priest and repeat to them word for word what we have just heard.

Soldier. Do you want the queen?

[*The YOUNG SOLDIER shrugs his shoulders*]

Then . . . he only had to appear to them and talk to them, they were here. We saw him all right ourselves and they didn't, and they even prevented us from seeing him, and that takes the biscuit. This proves that dead kings become private individuals. Poor Laius! Now he knows how easy it is to get into touch with the great of the earth.

Young Soldier. But us?

Soldier. Oh! us! It's easy to get into touch with men, you coon. . . . But, don't you see . . . chiefs, queens, and high priests . . . they always go before it happens, or come when it's all over.

Young Soldier. What's "it"?

Soldier. How should I know? . . . I understand myself, that's the chief thing.

Young Soldier. And you wouldn't go and warn the queen?

Soldier. A word of advice: let princes deal with princes, phantoms with phantoms, and soldiers with soldiers.

[*Flourish*]

ACT TWO

THE MEETING OF OEDIPUS AND THE SPHINX

The Voice. Spectators, let us imagine we can recall the minutes we have just lived through together and relive them elsewhere.

For, while the Phantom of Laius was trying to warn Jocasta on the ramparts of Thebes, the Sphinx and Oedipus met on a hill overlooking the town. The bugle-calls, moon, stars, and crowing cocks will be the same.

An unpeopled spot on a hill overlooking Thebes, by moonlight. The road to Thebes (from right to left) passes over the fore-stage. It gives the impression of rounding a high leaning stone whose base is fixed at the lower end of the platform and forms the support for the wings on the right. Behind the ruins of a little temple is a broken wall. In the middle of the wall stands a complete pedestal which used to indicate the entrance to the temple and bears the trace of a chimera: a wing, a foot, a haunch.

Broken and overturned columns. For the shades of Anubis and Nemesis at the end, a record by the actors can declaim the dialogue, whilst the actress mimes the part of the dead girl with the head of a jackal.

When the curtain rises a girl in a white dress is seen sitting among the ruins. The head of a jackal lies in her lap, its body remaining hidden behind her. Distant bugle-calls.

The Sphinx. Listen.

The Jackal. Well?

The Sphinx. That's the last call. We're free.

[ANUBIS gets up and the JACKAL's head is seen to belong to him]

The Jackal, Anubis. It's the first. There'll be two more before the gates are closed.

The Sphinx. It's the last. I'm quite sure it's the last.

Anubis. You're sure because you want the gates closed, but I'm sorry duty forces me to contradict you; we're not free. That was the first bugle call. We'll wait.

The Sphinx. I may have been mistaken, but . . .

Anubis. May have been mistaken! You were. . . .

The Sphinx. Anubis! .

Anubis. Sphinx?

The Sphinx. I've had enough of killing, enough of dealing out death.

Anubis. We must obey. There are mysteries within mystery, gods above gods. We have our gods and they have theirs. That's what is called infinity.

The Sphinx. You see, Anubis, there is no second call. It's you who are mistaken, let us go. . . .

Anubis. Do you mean you would like this night to pass without any deaths?

The Sphinx. Yes! I do, indeed! Yes! Although it's growing late, I tremble to think some one may still come by.

Anubis. You're getting sensitive.

The Sphinx. That's my business.

Anubis. Don't get cross.

The Sphinx. Why must we always be acting without aim, without end, without understanding? Why, for example, should you have a dog's head, Anubis? Why have the god of the dead in the shape given to him by credulous people? Why must we have an Egyptian god in Greece and why must he have a dog's head?

Anubis. It's marvellous, how like a woman you look when it comes to asking questions.

The Sphinx. That is no answer!

Anubis. Well, my answer is: that logic forces us to appear to men in the shape in which they imagine us; otherwise, they would see only emptiness. Moreover, neither Egypt nor Greece nor death, neither the past nor the future has any meaning for us. Further, you know only too well to what use I must put this jaw. And finally, our masters prove their wisdom by giving me a material form which is not human and so preventing me from losing my head, however beastly it may be; for I am your keeper, remember. I can see that if they had given you a mere watchdog we should already be in Thebes with me on a leash and you sitting in the middle of a band of young men.

The Sphinx. How stupid you are!

Anubis. Then try and remember that these victims who touch the girl-figure you have assumed are no more than noughts wiped off a slate, even if each of these noughts were an open mouth calling for help.

The Sphinx. That may be. But here the calculations of gods are hard to follow. . . . Here we kill. Here the dead really die. Here I do kill.

[While the SPHINX was speaking with her eyes on the ground, ANUBIS pricked up his ears, looked round, and moved silently off over the ruins where he disappears. When the SPHINX raised

her eyes, she looks for ANUBIS and finds herself face to face with a small group of people who enter down stage right, and whom ANUBIS had scented. The group is composed of a Theban MATRON, her little boy and girl. The MATRON is dragging her daughter along. The boy is walking ahead]

The Matron. Look where you're going! Get along now! Don't look behind you! Leave your sister alone! Go on. . . . [*She sees the SPHINX as the little boy stumbles into her*] Look out! I told you to look where you're going! Oh! I'm so sorry, madam. . . . He never looks where he's going. . . . He hasn't hurt you, has he?

The Sphinx. No! not at all, madam.

The Matron. I didn't expect to meet any one on my path at such an hour.

The Sphinx. I'm new to these parts, I haven't been long in Thebes; I was on my way to a relative who lives in the country and got lost.

The Matron. Poor dear! And where does your relative live?

The Sphinx. . . . Near the twelfth milestone.

The Matron. The very part I come from! I had lunch with my family, at my brother's place, you know. He made me stay to dinner. And then you know you begin gossiping and don't notice the time, and so here I am going home after curfew with my brats half-asleep already.

The Sphinx. Good-night, madam.

The Matron. Good-night. [*She makes to go*] And . . . I say . . . don't linger on the way. I know the likes of you and me haven't much to fear . . . but I wouldn't be too bold, if I were you, till I was inside the walls.

The Sphinx. Are you afraid of thieves?

The Matron. Thieves! Ye gods, what could they get out of me? Oh! no, my dear. Where do you come from? Any one can see you're not from the town. Thieves! I should think so! I mean the Sphinx!

The Sphinx. Do you really, madam, honestly and truly believe in that nonsense yourself?

The Matron. That nonsense indeed! How young you are. Young people are so disbelieving these days. Oh! yes, they are. That's how disasters happen. Let alone the Sphinx, I'll give you a case from my family. . . . My brother that I've just left. . . .

[*She sits down and lowers her voice*] He married a beautiful tall blonde from the north. One night he wakes up and what does he find? His wife in bed without head or entrails. She was a vampire. When he'd got over the first fright, what does my brother do? Without a moment's hesitation he finds an egg and lays it on the pillow in the place of his wife's head. That's how you stop vampires getting back into their body. All at once he hears a moaning. It was the head and entrails flying wildly across the room and begging my brother to take away the egg. My brother wouldn't, and the head went from moans to anger, from anger to tears, from tears to kisses. To cut a long story short, my idiot brother takes away the egg and lets his wife get back into her body. Now he knows his wife is a vampire and my sons make fun of their uncle. They maintain that he made up this entire vampire story to disguise the fact that his wife really did go out, but with her body, and that he let her come back, and that he's a coward and ashamed of himself. But I know very well my sister-in-law is a vampire. . . . And my sons are in danger of marrying fiends from the Underworld, all because they are obstinate and disbelieving.

And the same with the Sphinx—I'm sorry if I hurt your feelings, but it's only the likes of my sons and you who don't believe in it.

The Sphinx. Your sons . . . ?

The Matron. Not the little brat who just bumped into you. I mean my boy of seventeen. . . .

The Sphinx. You have several sons, have you?

The Matron. I had four. Now I have three. Seven, sixteen, and seventeen. And I can tell you ever since that wicked beast appeared the house has been impossible.

The Sphinx. Your sons quarrel. . . ?

The Matron. I mean, my dear, that it's impossible to live under the same roof. The one who's sixteen is only interested in politics. According to him the Sphinx is a bug-bear used to scare the poor and to impose on them. 'There may have been something like your old Sphinx at one time—that's how my son speaks—but now the old Sphinx is dead; and he's merely a priest's demon and an excuse for police jobbery. They fleece and loot and terrorize the masses and then blame it all on the Sphinx. It's a

good thing the Sphinx has broad shoulders. Whose fault is it that we starve to death, that prices go up, and that bands of looters swarm over the countryside? Why, the Sphinx's, of course. And the Sphinx is to blame because business is bad, and the government's weak and one crash follows another; because the temples are glutted with rich offerings whilst mothers and wives are losing the bare necessities of life, and because foreigners with money to spend are leaving the town. . . . Ah, you should see him, miss, how he gets up on the table, shouting, waving his arms, and stamping his feet; and then he denounces those who are responsible for it all, preaches revolt, eggs on the anarchists, shouting at the top of his voice names that are enough to get us all hanged. And between ourselves, miss . . . I know . . . you can take it from me . . . the Sphinx exists all right, but they're making the most of it. You can be sure of that. What we want is a man, a dictator!

The Sphinx. And . . . what about the brother of your young dictator?

The Matron. Oh! he's another kettle of fish. He despises his brother, he despises me, he despises the gods, he despises everything. He makes you wonder where he can get hold of all he comes out with. He says, if you please, that the Sphinx would interest him if it killed for killing's sake, but that this Sphinx of ours is in league with the oracles, and so it doesn't interest him.

The Sphinx. And your fourth son? When was it . . . ?

The Matron. I lost him nearly a year ago. He was just nineteen.

The Sphinx. Poor woman. . . . What did he die of?

The Matron. The Sphinx.

The Sphinx [gloomily]. Ah! . . .

The Matron. It's all very well for his younger brother to maintain he was a victim of police intrigues. . . . Oh! no. There's no mistake, he died through the Sphinx. Ah! my dear . . . if I live to a hundred I'll never forget that scene. One morning (he hadn't been home that night) I thought I heard him knock; I opened the front door and saw the underneath of his poor feet and then there followed a long way off, ever so far away, his poor little face, and in the back of his neck—look, just here—a large wound from which the blood had already stopped flowing. They

brought him to me on a stretcher. Then I went: Ho! and fell, all of a heap. . . . A blow like that, you know, you don't get over in a hurry. You may be thankful you don't come from Thebes, thankful if you have no brothers. . . . You're lucky. . . . My other boy, the orator, wants to avenge him. What's the good? But he hates the priests, and my poor son was one of a series of human offerings.

The Sphinx. Human offerings?

The Matron. To be sure. During the first months of the Sphinx the soldiers were sent to avenge the fine young men who were found dead all over the place, and they returned empty-handed. The Sphinx couldn't be found. Then, as there was a rumour that the Sphinx asked riddles, young people from the schools were sacrificed; and then the priests stated that the Sphinx demanded human offerings. At that, the youngest and weakest and fairest were chosen.

The Sphinx. Poor woman!

The Matron. I tell you, my dear, what we want is a man of action. Queen Jocasta is still young. At a distance you would say she was twenty-nine or thirty. What we want is a ruler to fall from the sky, marry her, and kill the beast; some one to make an end of corruption, lock up Creon and Tiresias, improve the state of finance and liven up the people, some one who would care for the people and save us, yes, that's it, save us. . . .

The Son. Mummy!

The Matron. Sh!

The Son. Mummy . . . I say, mummy, what does the Sphinx look like?

The Matron. I don't know. [To the SPHINX] And what d'you think is the latest? They're asking us to contribute our last farthings for a monument to those killed by the Sphinx! Will that bring them back to us, I should like to know.

The Son. Mummy . . . what is the Sphinx like?

The Sphinx. Poor little chap! His sister's asleep. Come along. . . .

[THE SON clings to the skirt of the SPHINX]

The Matron. Now don't worry the lady.

The Sphinx. He's all right. [She strokes his neck]

The Son. I say, mummy, is this lady the Sphinx?

The Matron. Little silly. [To the

SPHINX] I hope you don't mind. At that age children don't know what they're saying. . . . [*She gets up*] Oh my! [*She takes the little girl who is asleep in her arms*] Come along now! Off we go, lazy-bones.

The Son. Mummy, is that lady the Sphinx? I say, mummy, is the Sphinx that lady? Is that the Sphinx, mummy?

The Matron. Sh! Don't be silly. [*To the SPHINX*] Well, good evening. Excuse my gossiping to you. I was glad to stop for a breather. . . . And . . . take care. [*Fanfare*] Quickly. There's the second bugle. After the third we'll be shut out.

The Sphinx. Go along, quickly. I'll hurry my way. You've put me on my guard.

The Matron. Believe me, we'll not feel safe until there comes a man who will rid us of this scourge.

[*She goes out left*]

The Son's Voice. I say, mummy, what's the Sphinx look like? Why wasn't it that lady? Then, what's he like?

The Sphinx. A scourge!

Anubis [*coming from among the ruins*]. That woman *would* have to come along here just now.

The Sphinx. I've been unhappy for the past two days, for two days now I've been carrying on in this miserable way in the hope that this massacre would come to an end.

Anubis. Don't worry. You're all right.

The Sphinx. Listen. This is my secret wish and these the circumstances which would allow me to mount my pedestal for a last time. A young man will climb the hill, I shall fall in love with him. He'll have no fear. And when I ask my question he will answer as to an equal. He will give the answer, d'you hear, Anubis, and I shall fall dead.

Anubis. Make no mistake: only your mortal form will fall dead.

The Sphinx. And isn't that the form I should want to live in to make him happy!

Anubis. It's nice to see that human form doesn't make a great goddess become a little woman.

The Sphinx. You see how right I was. That bugle we heard was the last after all.

Anubis. Daughter of men! One is never finished with you. I tell you no! No! [*He leaves her side and mounts an over-turned column*] That was the second.

When I've heard another one you can go. Oh!

The Sphinx. What is it?

Anubis. Bad news.

The Sphinx. Some one coming?

Anubis. Yes.

[*The SPHINX gets up beside ANUBIS and looks into the wings, right*]

The Sphinx. I can't! I can't and I won't question this young man. You needn't ask me to.

Anubis. I should say, if you're like a young mortal, he's like a young god.

The Sphinx. What grace, Anubis, and what shoulders! He's coming.

Anubis. I'll hide. Don't forget you are the Sphinx. I'm keeping my eye on you. I'll be with you at the first sign.

The Sphinx. Anubis, listen . . . quickly. . . .

Anubis. Sh! . . . He's here. [*ANUBIS hides*]

[*OEDIPUS enters up stage right. He is walking along with his eyes on the ground. He starts*]

Oedipus. Oh! I'm sorry. . . .

The Sphinx. I startled you.

Oedipus. Well . . . no . . . I was dreaming, I was miles away, and suddenly, before me. . . .

The Sphinx. You took me for an animal.

Oedipus. Almost.

The Sphinx. Almost? Almost an animal, that's the Sphinx.

Oedipus. Yes, I know.

The Sphinx. You admit you took me for the Sphinx. Thank you.

Oedipus. Oh! I soon realized my mistake.

The Sphinx. Too kind. The truth of the matter is, it can't be so amusing to find yourself suddenly face to face with the Sphinx, if you're a young man.

Oedipus. And . . . if you're a girl?

The Sphinx. He doesn't attack girls.

Oedipus. Because girls avoid his haunts and are not supposed to go out alone when the light is failing.

The Sphinx. You do well to mind your own business, young man, and let me go my way.

Oedipus. Which way?

The Sphinx. You're simply amazing. Must I give my reasons for being out to a complete stranger?

Oedipus. And suppose I guessed your reason?

The Sphinx. You amuse me.

Oedipus. Aren't you moved by curiosity, the curiosity which is raging amongst all modern young women, the curiosity to know what the Sphinx looks like? If he has claws, or a beak, or wings, and whether he takes after the tiger or the vulture?

The Sphinx. Oh! come, come.

Oedipus. The Sphinx is the criminal of the day. Who's seen him? No one. Fabulous rewards are promised to the first person who discovers him. The faint of heart tremble. Young men die. . . . But a girl, couldn't she venture into the forbidden area, setting orders at defiance, and dare what no reasonable person would dare, to unearth the monster, surprise him in his lair, get a view of him?

The Sphinx. You're on the wrong track, I tell you. I'm going back to a relative who lives in the country, and as I had forgotten the very existence of a Sphinx and that the outskirts of Thebes are not safe, I was resting a moment on the stones of these old ruins. You see how far you're out.

Oedipus. What a pity! For some time now I've only run across people as dull as ditchwater; so I hoped for something more unusual. Pardon me.

The Sphinx. Good evening!

Oedipus. Good evening! [*They pass each other. But OEDIPUS turns back*] I say! Pardon me. I may appear unpleasant, but, I must say, I can't bring myself to believe you. Your presence in these ruins still intrigues me enormously.

The Sphinx. You're simply incredible.

Oedipus. Because if you were like other girls, you would already have made off as fast as your legs would carry you.

The Sphinx. My dear boy, you're quite absurd.

Oedipus. It seemed to me so marvellous to find in a girl a worthy competitor.

The Sphinx. A competitor? Then you are looking for the Sphinx?

Oedipus. Looking for him? Let me tell you, I've been on the march for a whole month. Probably that's why I appeared ill-mannered just now. I was so wild with excitement as I drew near Thebes that I could have shouted my enthusiasm to the merest block of stone, when, instead of a block of stone, what stands in my path but a girl in

white. So I couldn't help talking to her about what was uppermost in my mind and attributing to her my own intentions.

The Sphinx. But surely, a moment ago, when you saw me spring out of the shadow, you didn't seem to me very much on the alert, for a man who wants to measure his strength with the enemy.

Oedipus. That is true. I was dreaming of fame, and the beast would have caught me unawares. Tomorrow in Thebes I shall equip myself and the hunt will begin.

The Sphinx. You love fame?

Oedipus. I'm not sure about that. I like trampling crowds, trumpet-calls, flying banners, waving palm-branches, the sun, gold and purple, happiness, luck—you know, to live!

The Sphinx. Is that what you call living?

Oedipus. Don't you?

The Sphinx. No, I must say I have quite a different idea of life.

Oedipus. What's that?

The Sphinx. To love. To be loved by the one you love.

Oedipus. I shall love my people and they me.

The Sphinx. The public square is not a home.

Oedipus. The public square has nothing to do with it. The people of Thebes are looking for a man. If I kill the Sphinx I shall be that man. Queen Jocasta is a widow; I shall marry her. . . .

The Sphinx. A woman who might be your mother!

Oedipus. The important thing is that she is not.

The Sphinx. Do you imagine that a queen and her people would give themselves up to the first comer?

Oedipus. Would you call the vanquisher of the Sphinx a first comer? I know the promised reward is the queen. Don't laugh at me. Please listen. You must. I must prove that my dream isn't merely a dream. My father is King of Corinth. My father and mother were already old when I was born and I lived in a court of gloom. Too much fuss and comfort produced in me a feverish longing for adventure. I began to pine and waste away, when one evening a drunk shouted at me that I was a bastard and that I was usurping the place of a legitimate son. Blows and abuse followed, and the next day, despite the tears of Merope

and Polybius, I decided to visit the sanctuaries and question the gods. They all replied with the same oracle: you will murder your father and marry your mother.

The Sphinx. What?

Oedipus. Yes, I mean it. At first this oracle fills you with horror, but my head is firmly fixed on my shoulders! I reflected on the absurdity of the whole thing. I made allowances for the gods and the priests, and I came to this conclusion: either the oracle hid a less serious meaning which had to be discovered, or the priests who communicate from temple to temple by means of birds found it perhaps to their advantage to put this oracle into the mouth of the gods and to weaken my chances of coming into power. Briefly, I soon forgot my fears, and, I own, profiting by this threat of parricide and incest, I fled the court so that I might satisfy my thirst for the unknown.

The Sphinx. Now it's my turn to feel dazed. I'm sorry I rather made fun of you. Will you forgive me, Prince?

Oedipus. Give me your hand. May I ask your name? Mine is Oedipus; I'm nineteen.

The Sphinx. Oh! what does it matter about mine, Oedipus? You must like illustrious names. . . . That of a little girl of seventeen wouldn't interest you.

Oedipus. That's unkind.

The Sphinx. You adore fame. Yet I should have thought the surest way of foiling the oracle would be to marry a woman younger than yourself.

Oedipus. That doesn't sound like you. That's more like a mother of Thebes where marriageable young men are few.

The Sphinx. And that's not like you either. That was a gross, common thing to say.

Oedipus. So, I shall have walked the roads past mountain and stream merely to take a wife who will quickly become a Sphinx, worse than that, a Sphinx with breasts and claws!

The Sphinx. Oedipus. . . .

Oedipus. No, thank you! I prefer to try my luck. Take this belt: with that you will be able to get to me when I have killed the beast.

The Sphinx. Have you ever killed?

Oedipus. Yes, once. At the cross-roads of Delphi and Daulis. I was walking along

like a moment ago. A carriage was approaching driven by an old man with an escort of four servants. When I was on a level with the horses, one of them reared and knocked me into a serving-man. The fool tried to strike me, I aimed a blow at him with my stick, but he dodged down and I caught the old man on the temple. He fell and the horses bolted, dragging him along. I ran after them, the servants were terrified and fled; I found myself alone with the bleeding body of the old man and the horses who screamed as they rolled about entangled, and broke their legs. It was dreadful . . . dreadful. . . .

The Sphinx. Yes, isn't it . . . it's dreadful to kill.

Oedipus. Oh, well, it wasn't my fault and I think no more about it. The thing is to clear all obstacles, to wear blinkers, and not to give way to self-pity. Besides, there is my star.

The Sphinx. Then farewell, Oedipus. I am of the sex which is disturbing to heroes. Let us go our ways, we can have little in common.

Oedipus. Disturbing to heroes, eh! You have a high opinion of your sex.

The Sphinx. And . . . supposing the Sphinx killed you?

Oedipus. His death depends, if I'm not mistaken, on questions which I must answer. If I guess right he won't even touch me, he'll just die.

The Sphinx. And if you do not guess right?

Oedipus. Thanks to my unhappy childhood, I have pursued studies which give me a great start over the riff-raff of Thebes.

The Sphinx. I'm glad to hear it.

Oedipus. And I don't think this simple-minded monster is expecting to be confronted by a pupil of the best scholars of Corinth.

The Sphinx. You have an answer to everything. A pity, for, I own, Oedipus, I have a soft spot for weak people, and I should like to have found you wanting.

Oedipus. Farewell.

[*The SPHINX makes one step as if to rush in pursuit of OEDIPUS, stops, but cannot resist the call. Until her "I! I!" the SPHINX does not take her eyes off those of OEDIPUS; she moves as it were round this immobile, steady, vast*

gaze from under eyelids which do not flicker]

The Sphinx. Oedipus!

Oedipus. Did you call me?

The Sphinx. One last word. For the moment does nothing else occupy your mind, nothing else fire your heart, nothing stir your spirit save the Sphinx?

Oedipus. Nothing else, for the moment.

The Sphinx. And he . . . or she who brought you into his presence. . . . I mean who would help you. . . . I mean who may perhaps know something to help bring about this meeting . . . would he or she in your eyes assume such prestige that you would be touched and moved?

Oedipus. Naturally, but what does all this mean?

The Sphinx. And supposing I, I myself, were to divulge a secret, a tremendous secret?

Oedipus. You're joking!

The Sphinx. A secret which would allow you to enter into contact with the enigma of enigmas, with the human beast, with the singing bitch, as it is called, with the Sphinx?

Oedipus. What! You? You? Did I guess aright, and has your curiosity led you to discover . . . ? No! How stupid of me. This is a woman's trick to make me turn back.

The Sphinx. Good-bye.

Oedipus. Oh! Forgive me! . . .

The Sphinx. Too late.

Oedipus. I'm kneeling, a simple fool who begs forgiveness.

The Sphinx. You're a fatuous young man who is sorry to have lost his chance and is trying to get it back.

Oedipus. I am and I'm ashamed. Look, I believe you, I'll listen. But if you have played me a trick, I shall drag you by the hair and grip you till the blood flows.

The Sphinx. Come here. [*She leads him opposite the pedestal.*] Shut your eyes. Don't cheat. Count up to fifty.

Oedipus [*with his eyes shut*]. Take care!

The Sphinx. It's your turn to do that.

[*OEDIPUS counts. One feels that something extraordinary is happening. The SPHINX bounds across the ruins, disappears behind a wall and reappears in the real pedestal, that is, she seems to be fastened on to the pedestal, the bust resting on the elbows and looking*

straight ahead, whereas the actress is really standing, and only lets her bust appear and her arms in spotted gloves with her hands grasping the edge; out of the broken wing suddenly grow two immense, pale, luminous wings and the fragment of statue completes her, prolonging her, and appearing to belong to her. OEDIPUS is heard counting 47, 48, 49, then he makes a pause and shouts: 50. He turns round]

Oedipus. You!

The Sphinx [*in a high distant voice, joyous and terrible*]. Yes. I! I, the Sphinx!

Oedipus. I'm dreaming!

The Sphinx. You are no dreamer, Oedipus. You know what you want, and did want. Silence. Here I command. Approach.

[*OEDIPUS, with his arms held stiffly by his body as if paralysed, tries frantically to free himself*]

The Sphinx. Come forward. [*OEDIPUS falls on his knees*] As your legs refuse their help, jump, hop. . . . It's good for a hero to make himself ridiculous. Come along! Move yourself! Don't worry, there's nobody to see you.

[*OEDIPUS, writhing with anger, moves forward on his knees*]

The Sphinx. That's it. Stop! And now. . . .

Oedipus. And now, I'm beginning to understand your methods, what moves you make to lure and slay.

The Sphinx. . . . And now, I am going to give you a demonstration, I'm going to show you what would happen in this place, Oedipus, if you were any ordinary handsome youth from Thebes, and if you hadn't the privilege of pleasing me.

Oedipus. I know what your pleasantries are worth.

[*He knits up all the muscles of his body. It is obvious he is struggling against a charm*]

The Sphinx. Yield! Don't try to screw up your muscles and resist. Relax! If you resist you will only make my task more delicate and I might hurt you.

Oedipus. I shall resist!

[*He shuts his eyes and turns his head away*]

The Sphinx. You need not shut your eyes or turn away your head. For it is not by my look nor by my voice that I work.

A blind man is not so dextrous, the net of a gladiator not so swift, nor lightning so fine, nor a coachman so stiff, nor a cow so weighty, nor a schoolboy working at his sums with his tongue out so good, nor a ship so hung with rigging, so spread with sails, secure and buoyant; a judge is not so incorruptible, insects so voracious, birds so bloodthirsty, the egg so nocturnal, Chinese executioners so ingenious, the heart so fitful, the trickster's hand so deft, the stars so fateful, the snake moistening its prey with saliva so attentive. I secrete, I spin, I pay out, I wind, I unwind, I rewind, in such a way that it is enough for me to desire these knots for them to be made, to think about them for them to be pulled tight or slackened. My thread is so fine it escapes the eye, so fluid you might think you were suffering from a poison, so hard a quiver on my part would break your limbs, so highly strung a bow stroked between us would make music in the air; curled like the sea, the column and the rose, muscled like the octopus, contrived like the settings of our dreams, above all invisible, unseen, and majestic like the blood circulating in statues, my thread coils round you in fantastic patterns with the volubility of honey falling upon honey.

Oedipus. Let me go!

The Sphinx. And I speak, I work, I wind, I unwind, I calculate, I meditate, I weave, I winnow, I knit, I plait, I cross, I go over it again and again, I tie and untie and tie again, retaining the smallest knots that I shall later on have to untie for you on pain of death; I pull tight, I loosen, I make mistakes and go back, I hesitate, I correct, entangle and disentangle, unlace, lace up and begin afresh; and I adjust, I agglutinate, I pinion, I strap, I shackle, I heap up my effects, till you feel that from the tip of your toes to the top of your head you are wrapped round by all the muscles of a reptile whose slightest breath constricts yours and makes you inert like the arm on which you fall asleep.

Oedipus [*in a weak voice*]. Let me be! Mercy! . . .

The Sphinx. And you will cry for mercy, and you won't have to be ashamed of that, for you won't be the first. I have heard prouder than you call for their mothers, and I have seen more insolent than you burst into tears; and the more silent are even

weaker than the rest: they faint before the end and I have to minister to them after the fashion of embalmers in whose hands the dead are drunk men no longer able to stand on their feet!

Oedipus. Merope! . . . Mother!

The Sphinx. Then, I should command you to advance a little closer, and I should help you by loosening your limbs. So! And I should question you. I should ask you, for example: What animal is it that goes on four legs in the morning, in the afternoon on two, and in the evening on three? And you would cudgel your brains, till in the end your mind would settle on a little medal you won as a child, or you would repeat a number, or count the stars between these two broken columns; and I should make you return to the point by revealing the enigma.

Man is the animal who walks on four legs when he is a child, on two when he is full-grown, and when he is old with the help of a stick as a third leg.

Oedipus. How idiotic!

The Sphinx. You would shout: How idiotic! You all say that. Then, since that cry only confirms your failure, I shall call my assistant, Anubis. Anubis!

[ANUBIS appears and stands on the right of the pedestal with folded arms and his head turned to one side]

Oedipus. Oh! Sphinx. . . . Oh! Sphinx, madam! Please, no! No!

The Sphinx. And I should make you go down on your knees. Go on . . . Go on . . . that's right. . . . Do as you're told And you'd bend your head . . . and Anubis would bound forward. He would open his wolf-like jaws!

[OEDIPUS utters a cry]

I said: *would bend, would bound forward, would open.* . . . Haven't I always been careful to express myself in that mood? Why that cry? Why that horrified expression? It was a demonstration, Oedipus, simply a demonstration. You're free.

Oedipus. Free!

[He moves an arm, a leg. . . . He gets up, he reels, he puts his hand to his head]

Anubis. Pardon me, Sphinx, this man cannot leave here without undergoing the test.

The Sphinx. But. . . .

Anubis. Question him.

Oedipus. But. . .

Anubis. Silence! Question this man.

[*A silence. OEDIPUS turns his back and remains motionless*]

The Sphinx. I'll question him. . . All right. . . I'll question him. . . [*With a last look of surprise at ANUBIS*] What animal is it that walks on four legs in the morning, on two in the afternoon, and on three in the evening?

Oedipus. Why, man, of course! He crawls along on four legs when he's little, and walks on two legs when he is big, and when he's old he helps himself along with a stick as a third leg.

[*The SPHINX sways on her pedestal*]

Oedipus [*making his way to the left*] Victory!

[*He rushes out left. The SPHINX slips down into the column, disappears behind the wall, and reappears wingless*]

The Sphinx. Oedipus! Where is he? Where is he?

Anubis. Gone, flown. He is running breathlessly to proclaim his victory.

The Sphinx. Without so much as a look my way, without a movement betraying feeling, without a sign of gratitude.

Anubis. Did you expect anything else?

The Sphinx. Oh, the fool! Then he has not understood a single thing.

Anubis. Not a single thing.

The Sphinx. Kss! Kss! Anubis. . . Here, here, look, after him, quickly, bite him, Anubis, bite him!

Anubis. And now it's all going to begin afresh. You're a woman again and I'm a dog.

The Sphinx. I'm sorry. I lost my head, I'm mad. My hands are trembling. I'm like fire. I wish I could catch him again in one bound, I'd spit in his face, claw him with my nails, disfigure him, trample on him, castrate him, and flay him alive!

Anubis. That's more like yourself.

The Sphinx. Help me! Avenge me! Don't stand there idle!

Anubis. Do you really hate this man?

The Sphinx. I do.

Anubis. The worst that could happen to him would seem too good to you?

The Sphinx. It would.

Anubis [*holding up the SPHINX's dress*]. Look at the folds in this cloth. Crush them together. Now if you pierce this bundle with a pin, remove the pin, smooth the

cloth till all trace of the old creases disappears, do you think a simple country loon would believe that the innumerable holes recurring at intervals result from a single thrust of a pin?

The Sphinx. Certainly not.

Anubis. Human time is a fold of eternity. For us time does not exist. From his birth to his death the life of Oedipus is spread flat before my eyes, with its series of episodes.

The Sphinx. Speak, speak, Anubis, I'm burning to hear. What d' you see?

Anubis. In the past Jocasta and Laius had a child. As the oracle gave out that this child would be a scourge. . .

The Sphinx. A scourge!

Anubis. A monster, an unclean beast. . .

The Sphinx. Quicker, quicker!

Anubis. Jocasta bound it up and sent it into the mountains to get lost. A shepherd of Polybius found it, took it away, and, as Polybius and Merope were lamenting a sterile marriage. . .

The Sphinx. I can't contain myself for joy.

Anubis. They adopted it. Oedipus, son of Laius, killed Laius where the three roads cross.

The Sphinx. The old man.

Anubis. Son of Jocasta, he will marry Jocasta.

The Sphinx. And to think I said to him: "She might be your mother." And he replied: "The important thing is that she is not." Anubis! Anubis! It's too good to be true. . .

Anubis. He will have two sons who will kill each other, and two daughters one of whom will hang herself. Jocasta will hang herself. . .

The Sphinx. Stop! What more could I hope for? Think, Anubis: the wedding of Jocasta and Oedipus! The union of mother and son. . . And will he know soon?

Anubis. Soon enough.

The Sphinx. What a moment to live! I have a foretaste of its delights. Oh! to be present!

Anubis. You will be.

The Sphinx. Is that true? . . .

Anubis. I think the moment has come to remind you who you are and what a ridiculous distance separates you from this little body which is listening to me. You who have assumed the role of Sphinx! You, the

Goddess of Goddesses! You, the greatest of the great! The implacable! Vengeance! Nemesis! [ANUBIS prostrates himself]

The Sphinx. Nemesis. . . . [She turns her back to the audience and remains a while erect, making a cross with her arms. Suddenly she comes out of this hypnotic state and rushes up stage] Once more, if he is in sight, I should like to feed my hatred, I want to see him run from one trap to another like a stunned rat.

Anubis. Is that the cry of the awakening goddess or of the jealous woman?

The Sphinx. Of the goddess, Anubis, of the goddess. Our gods have cast me for the part of the Sphinx, and I shall show myself worthy of it.

Anubis. At last!

[*The SPHINX looks down on the plain, leaning over to examine it. Suddenly she turns round. The last trace of the greatness and fury which had transformed her has disappeared*]

The Sphinx. Dog! you lied to me.

Anubis. I?

The Sphinx. Yes, you! Liar! liar! Look along the road. Oedipus is coming back, he's running, he's flying, he loves me, he has understood!

Anubis. You know very well, Madam, what accompanies his success and why the Sphinx is not dead.

The Sphinx. Look how he jumps from rock to rock, just as my heart leaps in my breast.

Anubis. Convinced of his triumph and your death this young fool has just realized that in his haste he's forgotten the most important thing.

The Sphinx. Mean wretch! Do you mean to tell me he wants to find me dead?

Anubis. Not you, my little fury: the Sphinx. He thinks he's killed the Sphinx; he will have to prove it. Thebes won't be satisfied with a fisherman's yarn.

The Sphinx. You're lying. I'll tell him everything. I'll warn him. I'll save him. I'll turn him away from Jocasta, from that miserable town. . . .

Anubis. Take care.

The Sphinx. I shall speak.

Anubis. He's coming. Let him speak first.

[*OEDIPUS, out of breath, comes in down stage, left. He sees the SPHINX and ANUBIS standing side by side*]

Oedipus [*saluting*]. I'm happy to see, Madam, what good health the immortals enjoy after their death.

The Sphinx. What brings you back here?

Oedipus. The collecting of my due.

[*Angry movement on the part of ANUBIS towards OEDIPUS, who steps back*]

The Sphinx. Anubis! [*With a gesture she orders him to leave her alone. He goes behind the ruins. To OEDIPUS*] You shall have it. Stay where you are. The loser is a woman. She asks one last favour of her master.

Oedipus. Excuse me for being on my guard, but you've taught me to distrust your feminine wiles.

The Sphinx. Ah! I was the Sphinx. No, Oedipus. . . . You will bear my mortal remains to Thebes and the future will reward you . . . according to your deserts. No . . . I ask you merely to let me disappear behind this wall so that I may take off this body in which, I must confess, I have, for some little while, felt rather . . . cramped.

Oedipus. Very well. But be quick. At the last bugles. . . . [*The bugles are heard*] You see, I speak of them and they are sounded. I must waste no time.

The Sphinx [*hidden*]. Thebes will not leave a hero standing at her gates.

Voice of Anubis [*from behind the ruins*]. Hurry, Madam, hurry. It looks as though you're inventing excuses and dawdling on purpose.

The Sphinx [*hidden*]. Am I the first, God of the Dead, whom you've had to drag by the clothes?

Oedipus. You're trying to gain time, Sphinx.

The Sphinx [*hidden*]. So much the better for you, Oedipus. My haste might have served you ill. A serious difficulty occurs to me. If you bear into Thebes the body of a girl instead of the monster which the people expect, the crowd will stone you.

Oedipus. That's true! Women are simply amazing; they think of everything.

The Sphinx [*hidden*]. They call me: The virgin with the claws. . . . The singing bitch. . . . They will want to identify my fangs. Don't be alarmed. Anubis! My faithful dog! Listen, since our faces are only shadows, I want you to give me your jackal's head.

Oedipus. Splendid idea!

Anubis [*hidden*]. Do what you like, so

long as this shameful play-acting may come to an end and you may become yourself once more.

The Sphinx [hidden]. I shan't be long.

Oedipus. I shall count up to fifty as I did before. I'll have my own back.

Anubis [hidden]. Madam, Madam, what are you waiting for?

The Sphinx. Now I'm ugly, Anubis. A monster! . . . Poor boy . . . supposing I frighten him. . . .

Anubis. Don't worry, he won't even see you.

The Sphinx. Is he blind then?

Anubis. Many men are born blind and only realize it the day a home-truth hits them between the eyes.

Oedipus. Fifty!

Anubis [hidden]. Go on. . . . Go on. . . .

The Sphinx [hidden]. Farewell, Sphinx.

[From behind the wall comes the staggering figure of a girl with a jackal's head. She waves her arms in the air and falls]

Oedipus. About time too! [He rushes forward, not stopping to look, lifts the body, and takes a stand down stage right. He carries the body before him on his outstretched arms] No! not like that! I should look like that tragedian I saw in Corinth playing the part of a king carrying the body of his son. The pose was pompous and moved no one.

[He tries holding the body under his left arm; behind the ruins on the mound appear two giant forms covered with rainbow veils: the gods]

Oedipus. No! I should be ridiculous. Like a hunter going home empty-handed after killing his dog.

Anubis [the form on the right]. To free your goddess's body of all human contamination, perhaps it might be as well for this Oedipus to disinfect you by bestowing on himself at least a title of demi-god.

Nemesis [the form on the left]. He is so young. . . .

Oedipus. Hercules! Hercules threw the lion over his shoulder! . . . [He puts the body over his shoulder] Yes, over my shoulder. Over my shoulder! Like a demi-god!

Anubis [veiled]. Isn't he simply incredible!

Oedipus [moving off towards the left, taking two steps after each of his thanks-

givings]. I have killed the unclean beast. *Nemesis* [veiled]. Anubis. . . . I feel very ill at ease.

Anubis. We must go.

Oedipus. I have saved the town!

Anubis. Come along, mistress, let us go.

Oedipus. I shall marry Queen Jocasta!

Nemesis [veiled]. Poor, poor, poor mankind! . . . I can stand no more, Anubis. . . . I can't breathe. Let us leave the earth.

Oedipus. I shall be king!

[A murmur envelopes the two huge forms. The veils fly round them. Day breaks. Cocks crow]

ACT THREE

THE WEDDING NIGHT

The Voice. The coronation and nuptial celebrations have been going on since dawn. The crowd has just acclaimed the queen and the conqueror of the Sphinx for the last time.

Every one goes home. In the little square of the royal palace now rises only the slight murmur of a fountain. Oedipus and Jocasta find privacy at last in the nuptial chamber. They are very tired and heavy with sleep. In spite of a few hints and civilities on the part of destiny, sleep will prevent them from seeing the trap which is closing on them for ever.

The platform represents Jocasta's bedroom, which is as red as a little butcher's shop amid the town buildings. A broad bed covered with white furs. At the foot of the bed, an animal's skin. On the right of the bed, a cradle.

On the right fore-stage, a latticed bay window, looking on to the square of Thebes. On the left fore-stage, a movable mirror of human size.

OEDIPUS and JOCASTA are wearing their coronation costumes. From the moment the curtain rises, they move about in the slow motion induced by extreme fatigue.

Jocasta. Phew! I'm done! You are so active, dear! I am afraid, for you, this room will become a cage, a prison.

Oedipus. My dear love! A scented bedroom, a woman's room, yours! After this killing day, those processions, that ceremo-

nial, that crowd which still clamoured for us under our very windows. . . .

Jocasta. Not clamoured for us . . . for you, dear.

Oedipus. Same thing.

Jocasta. You must be truthful, my young conqueror. They hate me. My dress annoys them, my accent annoys them, they are annoyed by my blackened eyelashes, my rouge, and my liveliness!

Oedipus. It's Creon who annoys them! The cold, hard, inhuman Creon! I shall make your star rise again. Ah! *Jocasta!* What a magnificent programme!

Jocasta. It was high time you came. I can't stand it any more.

Oedipus. Your room a prison! Your room, dear . . . and our bed.

Jocasta. Do you want me to remove the cradle? After the death of the child, I had to have it near me, I couldn't sleep. . . . I was too lonely. . . . But now. . . .

Oedipus [*in an indistinct voice*]. But now. . . .

Jocasta. What?

Oedipus. I said . . . I said. . . . that it's he . . . he . . . the dog . . . I mean . . . the dog who won't . . . the dog . . . the fountain dog . . .

[*His head droops*]

Jocasta. Oedipus! Oedipus!

Oedipus [*awakens, startled*]. What?

Jocasta. You were falling asleep, dear!

Oedipus. Me? Never.

Jocasta. Oh, yes, you were, dear. You were telling me about a dog who won't . . . a fountain-dog. And I was listening.

[*She laughs and herself seems to be becoming vague*]

Oedipus. Nonsense!

Jocasta. I was asking you if you wanted me to remove the cradle, if it worries you.

Oedipus. Am I such a kid as to fear this pretty muslin ghost? On the contrary, it will be the cradle of my luck. My luck will grow in it beside our love until it can be used for our first son. So you see! . . .

Jocasta. My poor love. . . . You're dropping with fatigue and here we stand . . . [*Same business as with OEDIPUS*] . . . stand on this wall. . . .

Oedipus. What wall?

Jocasta. This rampart wall. [*She starts*] A wall . . . What? I . . . I . . . [*Haggard*] What's happening?

Oedipus [*laughing*]. Well, this time it's

you dreaming. We're tired out, my poor sweet.

Jocasta. I was asleep? Did I talk?

Oedipus. We are a pretty pair! Here I go telling you about fountain-dogs, and you tell me about rampart walls: and this is our wedding night! Listen, *Jocasta*, if I happen to fall asleep again (are you listening?), do please awaken me, shake me, and if you fall asleep, I'll do the same for you. This one night of all must not founder in sleep. That would be too sad.

Jocasta. You crazy darling you, why? We have all our life before us.

Oedipus. Maybe, but I don't want sleep to spoil the miracle of passing this joyous night alone, unutterably alone with you. I suggest we remove these heavy clothes, and as we're not expecting any one. . . .

Jocasta. Listen, my darling boy, you'll be cross. . . .

Oedipus. *Jocasta*, don't tell me there's still some official duty on the programme!

Jocasta. While my women are doing my hair, etiquette demands that you receive a visit.

Oedipus. A visit? At this hour?

Jocasta. A visit . . . a visit . . . a purely formal visit.

Oedipus. In this room?

Jocasta. In this room.

Oedipus. From whom?

Jocasta. Now don't get cross. From *Tiresias*.

Oedipus. *Tiresias*? I refuse!

Jocasta. Listen, dear. . . .

Oedipus. That's the limit! *Tiresias* playing the part of the family pouring out their farewell advice. How comic! I shall refuse his visit.

Jocasta. You crazy dear, I am asking you to. It's an old custom in Thebes that the high priest must in some way bless the royal marriage bonds. And besides, *Tiresias* is our old uncle, our watch-dog. I am very fond of him, *Oedipus*, and *Laius* adored him. He is nearly blind. It would be unfortunate if you hurt his feelings and set him against our love.

Oedipus. That's all very well . . . in the middle of the night . . .

Jocasta. Do! Please, for our sake and the sake of the future. It's essential. See him for five minutes, but see him and listen to him. I ask you to. [*She kisses him*]

Oedipus. I warn you I shan't let him sit down.

Jocasta. I love you, dear. [*Long kiss*] I shall not be long. [*At the right-hand exit*] I am going to let him know he can come. Be patient. Do it for my sake. Think of me. [*She goes out.*]

[*OEDIPUS, alone, looks at himself in the mirror and tries attitudes. TIRESIAS comes in left, unheard. OEDIPUS sees him in the middle of the room and turns about face.*]

Oedipus. I am listening.

Tiresias. Steady, my lord. Who told you I had saved up a sermon for your especial benefit?

Oedipus. No one, Tiresias, no one. But I don't suppose you find it pleasant acting as kill-joy. I suggest you are waiting for me to pretend I have received your advice. I shall bow, and you will give me the accolade. That would be enough for us in our tired state and at the same time custom would be satisfied. Have I guessed right?

Tiresias. It is perhaps correct that there is at the bottom of this procedure a sort of custom, but for that, it would be necessary to have a royal marriage with all the dynastic, mechanical, and, I admit, even irksome business which that entails. No, my lord. Unforeseen events bring us face to face with new problems and duties. And you will agree, I think, that your coronation, and your marriage, appear in a form which is difficult to classify, and does not fit into any code.

Oedipus. No one could say more graciously that I have crashed on Thebes like a tile from a roof.

Tiresias. My lord!

Oedipus. You must know, then, that classifiable things reek of death. You must strike out in other spheres, Tiresias, quit the ranks. That's the sign of masterpieces and heroes. An original, that's the person to astonish and to rule.

Tiresias. Right! Then you will admit that, as I have taken on a job outside the ceremonial sphere, I am striking out on a new line for myself.

Oedipus. To the point, Tiresias, to the point.

Tiresias. Good. Then I'll go straight to the point and speak in all frankness. My lord, your auguries look black, very black. I must put you on your guard.

Oedipus. Well, if I didn't expect that! Anything else would have surprised me. This is not the first time the oracles have set about me and my audacity has thwarted them.

Tiresias. Do you believe they can be thwarted?

Oedipus. I am the living proof of it. And even if my marriage upsets the gods, what about your promises, your freeing of the town, and the death of the Sphinx? And why should the gods have pushed me on as far as this room, if this marriage displeases them?

Tiresias. Do you think you can solve the problem of free will in a minute? Ah! power, I fear, is going to your head.

Oedipus. And power is slipping away from you.

Tiresias. Take care! You are speaking to a high priest.

Oedipus. Take care yourself, high priest. Must I remind you that you are speaking to your king?

Tiresias. To the husband of my queen, my lord.

Oedipus. Jocasta notified me a little while ago that her power is to pass into my hands, in full. Say that to your master.

Tiresias. I serve only the gods.

Oedipus. Well, if you prefer that way of putting it, say that to the person who is awaiting your return.

Tiresias. Headstrong youth! You don't understand me.

Oedipus. I understand perfectly well: an adventurer is in your way. I expect you hope I found the Sphinx dead on my path. The real conqueror must have sold it to me, like those hunters who buy the hare from a poacher. And supposing I have paid for the mortal remains, whom will you find ultimately as the conqueror of the Sphinx? The same type of person who has been threatening you every minute and preventing Creon from sleeping: a poor second-class soldier whom the crowd will bear in triumph and who will claim his due . . . [*shouting*] his due!

Tiresias. He would not dare.

Oedipus. Ah! you see! I have made you say it. That's the secret of the intrigue. There go your beautiful promises. That is what you were counting on.

Tiresias. The queen is more to me than my own daughter. I must watch over her

and defend her. She is weak, credulous, romantic. . . .

Oedipus. You are insulting her.

Tiresias. I love her.

Oedipus. She is in need of no one's love but mine.

Tiresias. About this love, Oedipus, I demand an explanation. Do you love the queen?

Oedipus. With all my being.

Tiresias. I mean: do you love to take her in your arms?

Oedipus. I love most of all to be taken in her arms.

Tiresias. I appreciate the delicate distinction. You are young, Oedipus, very young. Jocasta might be your mother. I know, oh! I know, you are going to reply. . . .

Oedipus. I am going to reply that I have always dreamed of such a love, an almost motherly love.

Tiresias. Oedipus, aren't you confusing love and love of glory? Would you love Jocasta if she were not on a throne?

Oedipus. A stupid question which is always being asked. Would Jocasta love me if I was old, ugly, and had not appeared out of the unknown? Do you fancy you cannot be infected by love through touching purple and gold? Are not the privileges of which you speak of the very substance of Jocasta, an organic part of her? We have been each other's from all eternity. Within her body lies fold after fold of a purple mantle which is much more regal than the one she fastens on her shoulders. I love and adore her, Tiresias. At her side, I seem to occupy at last my proper place. She is my wife, she is my queen. I possess her, I shall keep her, I shall find her again, and neither by prayers nor threats can you drag from me obedience to orders from heaven knows where.

Tiresias. Think it over again, Oedipus. The omens and my own wisdom give me every reason to fear this wild marriage. Think it over.

Oedipus. Rather late, don't you think?

Tiresias. Have you had experience of women?

Oedipus. Not the slightest. And to complete your astonishment and cover myself with ridicule in your eyes, I am a virgin.

Tiresias. You!

Oedipus. The high priest of a capital is

astonished that a country boy should put all his pride in keeping himself pure for a single offering. You would, no doubt, have preferred a degenerate prince, a puppet, so that Creon and the priests could work the strings.

Tiresias. You are going too far!

Oedipus. Must I order you again. . . .

Tiresias. Order? Has pride sent you mad?

Oedipus. Don't put me into a rage! My patience is at an end, my temper is ungovernable, and I am capable of any unpremeditated act.

Tiresias. What arrogance! . . . Weak and arrogant!

Oedipus. You will have brought it on yourself.

[*He throws himself upon Tiresias, seizing him by the neck*]

Tiresias. Let me go. . . . Have you no shame? . . .

Oedipus. You are afraid that I could, from your face, there, there, close up, and in your blind man's eyes, read the real truth about your behaviour.

Tiresias. Murderer! Sacrilege!

Oedipus. Murderer! I ought to be. . . . One day, I shall probably have to repent for this foolish respect, and if I dared. . . . Oh! oh! Why! Gods! look here . . . here . . . in his blind man's eyes, I had no idea it was possible.

Tiresias. Let me go! Brute!

Oedipus. The future! My future, as in a crystal bowl.

Tiresias. You will repent. . . .

Oedipus. I see, I see. . . . Soothsayer, you have lied! I shall marry Jocasta. . . . A happy life, rich, prosperous, two sons . . . daughters . . . and Jocasta still as beautiful, still the same, in love, a mother in a palace of happiness. . . . Now it's not so clear, not clear. I want to see! It's your fault, soothsayer. . . . I want to see! [*He shakes him*]

Tiresias. Curse you!

Oedipus [*suddenly recoiling, letting Tiresias go, and putting his hands over his eyes*]. Oh! filthy wretch! I am blind. He's thrown pepper at me. Jocasta! Help! Help! . . .

Tiresias. I threw nothing, I swear. You are punished for your sacrilege.

Oedipus [*writhing on the ground*]. You lie!

Tiresias. You wanted to read by force the secrets my diseased eyes hold and that I myself have not yet interpreted; and you are punished.

Oedipus. Water, water, quickly, it's burning me. . . .

Tiresias [*laying his hands over OEDIPUS' face*]. There, there. . . . Be a good boy. . . . I forgive you. Your nerves are on edge. Come, keep still. Your sight will return, I swear. I expect you got to the point which the gods wish to keep in darkness, or they may be punishing you for your impudence.

Oedipus. I can see a little . . . I think.

Tiresias. Are you in pain?

Oedipus. Less . . . the pain is going. Ah! . . . it was like fire, red pepper, a thousand pinpoints, a cat's paw scrabbling in my eye. Thank you. . . .

Tiresias. Can you see?

Oedipus. Not clearly, but I can see, I can see. Phew! I really thought I was blind for good and that it was one of your kind of tricks. Besides, I rather deserved it.

Tiresias. It's nice to believe in miracles when miracles suit us, and when they don't, it's nice to believe in them no longer but say it is a trick on the part of the soothsayer.

Oedipus. Forgive me. I am of a violent and vindictive disposition. I love Jocasta. I was waiting for her, impatiently, and this extraordinary phenomenon, all those images of the future in the pupil of your eyes put me under a spell, made me dizzy—as if I was drunk.

Tiresias. Can you see better now? It is an almost blind man asking you.

Oedipus. Quite, and I have no more pain. Heavens, I'm ashamed of my conduct towards an infirm old man and a priest. Will you accept my apologies?

Tiresias. I was only speaking for your own good and Jocasta's.

Oedipus. *Tiresias*, in a way I owe you something in return, a confession that is difficult to make, and which I had promised myself I would make to no one.

Tiresias. A confession?

Oedipus. I noticed during the coronation ceremony that you and Creon were making signs to one another. Do not deny it. Well, I wished to keep my identity secret; but I give it up. Listen carefully, *Tiresias*. I am not a wanderer. I come from Corinth.

I am the only child of King Polybius and Queen Merope. A nobody will not soil this marriage bed. I am a king and son of a king.

Tiresias. My lord. [*He bows*] A word from you would have cleared the atmosphere of the uneasiness created by your incognito. My little girl will be so glad. . . .

Oedipus. But wait! I ask you as a favour to safeguard at least this last night. Jocasta still loves in me the wanderer dropped out of the clouds, the young man stepping suddenly out of the shadows. It will unfortunately be only too easy to destroy this mirage tomorrow. In the meantime, I hope the queen will become sufficiently submissive for her to learn without disgust that Oedipus is not a prince fallen from the sky, but merely a prince.

I wish you good evening, *Tiresias*. Jocasta will be on her way back. I am dropping with fatigue . . . and we want to remain in intimacy together. This is our desire.

Tiresias. My lord, excuse me. [*OEDIPUS makes a sign to him with his hand. TIRESIAS stops at the left-hand exit*] One last word.

Oedipus [*loftily*]. What is it?

Tiresias. Forgive my boldness. This evening, after the closing of the temple, a beautiful young girl came into the private chapel where I work and, without a word of excuse, handed me this belt and said: "Give it to Lord Oedipus and repeat word for word this sentence: Take this belt: with that you will be able to get to me when I have killed the beast." I had scarcely tucked away the belt when the girl burst out laughing and disappeared, but I couldn't make out in what direction.

Oedipus [*snatching away the belt*]. And that's your trump card. You have already built up a whole system in order to destroy my hold on the queen's head and heart. How should I know? A previous promise of marriage. . . . A girl takes her revenge. . . . The temple scandal. . . . Tell-tale find. . . .

Tiresias. I was fulfilling my commission. That's all.

Oedipus. Miscalculation and bad policy. Go . . . and carry this bad news with all speed to Prince Creon. [*TIRESIAS stays on the threshold*] He reckoned he was going to scare me! But in point of fact, it is I who

scare you, Tiresias, I scare you. I can see it written in large letters on your face. It wasn't so easy to terrorize the child. Confess that the child terrifies you, grandpa! Confess, grandpa! Confess I terrify you! Confess at least I make you afraid!

[OEDIPUS is lying face down on the animal-skin. TIRESIAS is standing like a bronze statue. Silence. Then thunder]

Tiresias. Yes. Very afraid. [He leaves, walking backwards. His prophetic voice can be heard] Oedipus! Oedipus! listen to me. You are pursuing classic glory. There is another kind: obscure glory, the last resource of the arrogant person who persists in opposing the stars.

[OEDIPUS remains looking at the belt.

When JOCASTA comes in, in her night-dress, he quickly hides the belt under the animal-skin]

Jocasta. Well now? What did the old bogy say? He must have tormented you.

Oedipus. Yes . . . no. . . .

Jocasta. He's a monster. He must have proved to you that you are too young for me.

Oedipus. You are beautiful, Jocasta. . . !

Jocasta. . . . That I am old.

Oedipus. He rather gave me to understand that I loved your pearls, and your diadem.

Jocasta. Always damaging everything! Spoiling everything! Doing harm!

Oedipus. But you can take it from me, he didn't manage to scare me. On the contrary, I scared him. He admitted that.

Jocasta. Well done! My love! You, dear, after my pearls and diadem!

Oedipus. I am happy to see you again without any pomp, without your jewels and orders, white, young, and beautiful, in our loving room.

Jocasta. Young! Oedipus! . . . You mustn't tell lies. . . .

Oedipus. Again. . . .

Jocasta. Don't scold me.

Oedipus. Yes, I shall scold you! I shall scold you because a woman like you ought to be above such nonsense. A young girl's face is as boring as a white page on which my eyes can read nothing moving; whereas your face! . . . I must have the scars, the tattooing of destiny, a beauty which has weathered tempests. Why should you be afraid of crows' feet, Jocasta? What would

a silly little girl's look or smile be worth beside your remarkable face; struck by fate, marked by the hangman, and tender, tender and. . . . [He notices that JOCASTA is weeping] Jocasta! my dear little girl, you're crying! Whatever's the matter? . . . Oh, look here. . . . What have I done? Jocasta! . . .

Jocasta. Am I so old then . . . so very old?

Oedipus. My dear crazy girl! It's you who persist in. . . .

Jocasta. Women say things to be contradicted. They always hope it isn't true.

Oedipus. My dear Jocasta! . . . How silly I am! What a clumsy bear I am. . . . Darling. . . . Calm yourself, and kiss me. . . . I meant . . .

Jocasta. Never mind. . . . I am being ridiculous. [She dries her eyes]

Oedipus. It's all my fault.

Jocasta. It isn't. . . . There . . . the black is running into my eye now. [OEDIPUS coaxes her] It's all over.

Oedipus. Quick, a smile. [Slight rumbling of thunder] Listen.

Jocasta. My nerves are bad because of the storm.

Oedipus. The sky is so bright with stars, so pure.

Jocasta. Yes, but there is a storm brewing somewhere. When the fountain makes a still murmur like silence, and my shoulder aches, there is always a storm about and summer lightning.

[She leans against the bay window.

Summer lightning]

Oedipus. Come here, quickly. . . .

Jocasta. Oedipus! . . . come here a moment.

Oedipus. What is it? . . .

Jocasta. The sentry . . . look, lean out. On the bench on the right, he's asleep. Don't you think he's handsome, that boy? with his mouth wide open.

Oedipus. I'll teach him to sleep. I'll throw some water in his open mouth.

Jocasta. Oedipus!

Oedipus. How dare he sleep when guarding the queen!

Jocasta. The Sphinx is dead and you're alive. Let him sleep in peace! May all the town sleep in peace! May they all sleep every one!

Oedipus. Lucky sentry!

Jocasta. Oedipus! Oedipus! I should

like to make you jealous, but it isn't that. . . . This young guard. . . .

Oedipus. What is so extraordinary about this young guard then?

Jocasta. During that famous night, the night of the Sphinx, while you were encountering the beast, I had an escapade on the ramparts with Tiresias. I had heard that a young soldier had seen the spectre of Laius, and that Laius was calling for me to warn me of a threatening danger. Well . . . that soldier was the very sentry who is guarding us.

Oedipus. Who is guarding us! . . . Any way. . . . Let him sleep in peace, my kind Jocasta. I shall guard you all right on my own. Of course, not the slightest sign of the spectre of Laius.

Jocasta. Not the slightest, I'm sorry to say. . . . Poor lad! I touched his shoulders and legs, and kept saying to Zizi, "Touch, touch," and I was in a state . . . because he was like you. And it's true, you know, Oedipus, he was like you.

Oedipus. You say: "This guard was like you." But, Jocasta, you didn't know me then; it was impossible for you to know or to guess. . . .

Jocasta. Yes, indeed, that's true. I expect I meant to say my son would be about his age. [*Silence*] Yes . . . I am getting muddled. It's only now that this likeness strikes me. [*She shakes off this uneasy feeling*] You're a dear, you're good-looking, I love you. [*After an attitude*] Oedipus!

Oedipus. My goddess!

Jocasta. I approve of your not telling the story of your victory to Creon or to Tiresias, or to everybody [*with her arms round his neck*], but to me . . . to me!

Oedipus [*freeing himself*]. I had your promise! . . . And but for that boy . . .

Jocasta. Is the Jocasta of yesterday the Jocasta of now? Haven't I a right to share your memories without anybody else knowing anything about it?

Oedipus. Of course.

Jocasta. And do you remember, you kept saying: "No, no, Jocasta, later, later when we are in our loving room." Well, aren't we in our loving room? . . .

Oedipus. Persistent monkey! Charmer! She always ends by getting what she wants. Now lie still. . . . I am beginning.

Jocasta. Oh, Oedipus! Oedipus! What fun! What fun! I'm quite still.

[*Jocasta lies down, shuts her eyes, and keeps still. OEDIPUS begins lying, hesitating, inventing, accompanied by the storm*]

Oedipus. Now. I was nearing Thebes. I was following the goat-track which rounds the hill to the south of the town. I was thinking of the future, of you whom I imagined less beautiful than you are in reality, but still, very beautiful, painted, and sitting on a throne in the centre of a group of ladies-in-waiting. Supposing you do kill it, I thought, would you, Oedipus, dare to ask for the promised reward? Should I dare to go near the queen? . . . And I kept walking and worrying myself, when all of a sudden I came to a halt. My heart was beating hard. I had just heard a sort of song. The voice that sang it was not of this world. Was it the Sphinx? My haversack contained a knife. I slipped the knife under my tunic and crept along. Do you happen to know the ruins of a little temple on that hill, with a pedestal and the hind-quarters of a chimera? [*Silence*] Jocasta . . . Jocasta . . . Sleeping?

Jocasta [*awaking with a start*]. What? Oedipus. . . .

Oedipus. You were sleeping.

Jocasta. I wasn't.

Oedipus. Oh, yes, you were. There's a fickle little girl for you! She demands a story and then goes and falls asleep in the middle of it instead of listening.

Jocasta. I heard it all. You're mistaken. You were speaking of a goat-track.

Oedipus. A long way past the goat-track!

Jocasta. Don't be angry, darling. Are you cross with me? . . .

Oedipus. Me?

Jocasta. Yes, you are cross with me, and rightly. What a stupid silly I am! That's what age does for you.

Oedipus. Don't be sad. I'll start the story again, I promise you, but first of all you and I must lie down side by side and sleep a little. After that, we shall get out of this glue and this struggle against sleep which is spoiling everything. The first one to wake up will wake the other. Promise.

Jocasta. Promised. Poor queens know how to sleep sitting, for a minute between two audiences. But give me your hand. I am too old, Tiresias was right.

Oedipus. Perhaps so for Thebes, where girls are marriageable at thirteen. Then

what about me? Am I an old man? My head is drooping; I am woken up by my chin hitting my chest.

Jocasta. You? That's quite different, it's the dustman, as children say! But as for me. . . . You began to tell me the most marvellous story in the world and I go and doze away like a grandma beside the fire. And you will punish me by never beginning it over again, and finding excuses. . . . Did I talk?

Oedipus. Talk? No. I thought you were being very attentive. You naughty girl, have you some secrets you are afraid you might disclose to me during your sleep?

Jocasta. I was simply afraid of those foolish things that we sometimes say when sleeping.

Oedipus. You were resting as good as gold. So long, my little queen.

Jocasta. So long, my king, my love.

[Hand in hand, side by side, they shut their eyes and fall into the heavy sleep of people who struggle against sleep. A pause. The fountain soliloquizes. Slight thunder. Suddenly, the lightning becomes the lightning of dreams. The dream of OEDIPUS. The animal-skin is pushed up. It is lifted by the head of ANUBIS. He shows the belt at the end of his outstretched arm. OEDIPUS tosses about and turns over]

Anubis [in a slow mocking voice]. Thanks to my unhappy childhood, I have pursued studies which give me a great start over the riff-raff of Thebes, and I don't think this simple-minded monster is expecting to be confronted by a pupil of the best scholars of Corinth. But if you have played a trick on me, I shall drag you by the hair. *[Up to a howl]* I shall drag you by the hair, I shall drag you by the hair, I shall grip you till the blood flows! . . . I shall grip you till the blood flows! . . .

Jocasta [dreaming]. No, not that paste, not that foul paste! . . .

Oedipus [in a distant, muffled voice]. I shall count up to fifty: one, two, three, four, eight, seven, nine, ten, ten, eleven, fourteen, five, two, four, seven, fifteen, fifteen, fifteen, fifteen, three, four. . . .

Anubis. And Anubis would bound forward. He would open his wolf-like jaws!

[He disappears under the platform. The animal-skin resumes its normal appearance]

Oedipus. Help me! Help! Help! Come to me! Everybody! Come here!

Jocasta. What? What is it? Oedipus! my darling! I was sleeping like a lump! Wake up!

[She shakes him]

Oedipus [struggling and talking to the Sphinx]. Oh! Madam, Madam! Mercy, Madam! Mercy, Madam! No! No! No! No, Madam!

Jocasta. My pet, don't scare me so. It's a dream. This is me, me, Jocasta, your wife, Jocasta.

Oedipus. No, no! *[He awakens]* Where was I? How ghastly! Jocasta, is that you? . . . What a nightmare, what a horrible nightmare!

Jocasta. There, there, it's all over, you are in our room, dear, in my arms. . . .

Oedipus. Didn't you see anything? Really, how silly I am, it was that animal-skin. . . . Phew! I must have talked. What did I say?

Jocasta. It's your turn now. You were shouting: "Madam! No, no, Madam! No, Madam. Mercy, Madam!" Who was that wicked woman?

Oedipus. I've forgotten now. What a night!

Jocasta. And as for me! Your shouts saved me from an unspeakable nightmare. Look! You're soaked through, swimming in perspiration. It's my fault. I let you go to sleep in all those heavy clothes, golden chains, clasps, and those sandals which cut your heel. . . . *[She lifts him up. He falls back]* Come along! What a big baby! I can't possibly leave you in this state. Don't make yourself heavy, help me. . . .

[She lifts him up, takes off his tunic and rubs him down]

Oedipus [still in a vague state]. Yes, my little darling mother. . . .

Jocasta [mocking him]. "Yes, my little darling mother. . . ." What a child! Now he's taking me for his mother.

Oedipus [awake]. Oh, forgive me, Jocasta, my love, I am being so silly. You see I'm half asleep, I mix up everything. I was thousands of miles away with my mother who always thinks I'm too cold or too hot. You're not cross?

Jocasta. Silly boy! Let me see to you, and sleep away. All the time he's excusing himself and asking forgiveness. My word! What a polite young man! He must have

been taken care of by a very kind mother, very kind, and then you go and leave her, there. But I mustn't complain of that. I love with all the warmth of a woman in love that mother who petted you and kept you and brought you up for me, for us.

Oedipus. Sweet.

Jocasta. I should say so! Your sandals. Raise your left leg. [*She takes off his sandals*] And now the right. [*Same business; suddenly she utters a terrible cry*]

Oedipus. Hurt yourself?

Jocasta. No . . . no. . .

[*She recoils, and stares like a mad creature at OEDIPUS' feet*]

Oedipus. Ah! my scars. . . I didn't know they were so ugly. My poor darling, did they alarm you?

Jocasta. Those holes . . . how did you get them? . . . They must come from such serious injuries. . .

Oedipus. From the hunt, I think. I was in the woods; my nurse was carrying me. Suddenly from a clump of trees a wild boar broke cover and charged her. She lost her head and let me go. I fell and a wood-cutter killed the animal while it was belabouring me with its tusks. . . It's true! But she is as pale as a ghost! My darling! I ought to have warned you. I'm so used to them myself, those awful holes. I didn't know you were so sensitive. . .

Jocasta. It's nothing. . .

Oedipus. Weariness and sleepiness put us into this state of vague terror . . . you had just come out of a bad dream. . .

Jocasta. No. . . *Oedipus.* No. As a matter of fact, those scars remind me of something I am always trying to forget.

Oedipus. I always strike unlucky.

Jocasta. You couldn't possibly know. It's to do with a woman, my foster-sister and linen-maid. She was with child at the same age as myself, at eighteen. She worshipped her husband despite the difference of age and wanted a son. But the oracles predicted so fearful a future for the child that, after giving birth to a son, she had not the courage to let it live.

Oedipus. What?

Jocasta. Wait. . . Imagine what strength of mind a poor woman must have to do away with the life of her life . . . the son from her womb, her ideal on earth and love of loves.

Oedipus. And what did this . . . woman do?

Jocasta. With death in her heart, she bored holes in the feet of the nursing, tied them, carried it secretly to a mountain-side and abandoned it to the wolves and bears.

[*She hides her face*]

Oedipus. And the husband?

Jocasta. Everyone thought the child had died a natural death, and that the mother had buried it with her own hands.

Oedipus. And . . . this woman . . . still lives?

Jocasta. She is dead.

Oedipus. So much the better for her, for my first example of royal authority would have been to inflict on her, publicly, the worst tortures, and afterwards, to have her put to death.

Jocasta. The oracles were clear and matter-of-fact. Before those things a woman always feels so stupid and helpless.

Oedipus. To kill! [*Recalling LAIUS*] Of course, it isn't infamous to kill when carried away by the instinct of self-defence, and when bad luck is involved. But basely to kill in cold blood the flesh of one's flesh, to break the chain . . . to cheat in the game!

Jocasta. *Oedipus*, let's talk about something else . . . your furious little face upsets me too much.

Oedipus. Yes, let's talk about something else. I should be in danger of loving you less if you tried to defend this miserable wretch.

Jocasta. You're a man, my love, a free man and a chief! Try and put yourself in the place of a child-mother who is credulous about the oracles, worn out, disgusted, confined, and terrified by the priests. . .

Oedipus. A linen-maid! That's her only excuse. Would you have done it?

Jocasta [*with a gesture*]. No, of course not.

Oedipus. And don't run away with the idea that to fight the oracles requires a herculean determination. I could boast and pose as a wonder; I should be lying. You know, to thwart the oracles, I only had to turn my back on my family, my longings, and my country. But the farther I got from my native town, and the nearer I came to yours, the more I felt I was returning home.

Jocasta. *Oedipus*! *Oedipus*, that little mouth of yours which chatters away, that little wagging tongue, those frowning eye-

brows and fiery eyes! Couldn't the eyebrows relax a little, Oedipus, and the eyes close gently for once, and that mouth be used for softer caresses than words?

Oedipus. There I go again. A bear, a great bear, and a clumsy one at that.

Jocasta. You are a child.

Oedipus. I'm not a child.

Jocasta. Now he's off again! There, there, be a good boy.

Oedipus. You're right. I'm behaving very badly. Calm this talkative mouth with yours, and these feverish eyes with your fingers.

Jocasta. One moment. I'll shut the grating. I don't like to know that grating's open at night.

Oedipus. I'll go.

Jocasta. You stay lying down. . . . I'll take a look in the mirror at the same time. Do you want to embrace a fright? After all this excitement, the gods alone know what I look like. Don't make me nervous. Don't look at me. Turn the other way, Oedipus.

Oedipus. I'm turning over. [*He lies across the bed with his head on the edge of the cradle*] There, I'm shutting my eyes.

[*Jocasta goes to the window*]

Jocasta [*to OEDIPUS*]. The little soldier is still asleep, he's half-naked . . . and it isn't warm tonight . . . poor lad!

[*She goes to the movable mirror; suddenly, she stops, listening in the direction of the square. A DRUNK is talking very loud with long pauses between his reflections*]

Voice of the Drunk. Politics! . . . Pol-i-tics! What a mess! They just tickle me to death! . . . Ho! Look! a dead'un! . . . Sorry, a mistake: 's a soldier asleep. . . . Salute! Salute the sleeping army!

[*Silence. JOCASTA stands on her toes, and tries to see outside*]

Voice of the Drunk. Politics! . . . [*Long silence*] It's a disgrace. . . . a disgrace. . . .

Jocasta. Oedipus, my dear!

Oedipus [*in his sleep*]. Hi!

Jocasta. Oedipus! Oedipus! There's a drunk and the sentry doesn't hear him. I hate drunks. I want him sent away, and the soldier woken up. Oedipus! Oedipus! Please!

[*She shakes him*]

Oedipus. I wind, I unwind, I calculate, I meditate, I weave, I winnow, I knit, I plait, I cross, . . .

Jocasta. What's he saying? How beautifully he sleeps! I might die, he wouldn't notice it.

The Drunk. Politics!

[*He sings. As soon as the first lines are sung, JOCASTA leaves OEDIPUS, putting his head back on the edge of the cradle, and goes to the middle of the room. She listens*]

Madam, what ever are you at?

Madam, what ever are you at?

Your husband's much too young,

Much too young for you, that's

flat! . . . Flat. . . .

Et cetera. . . .

Jocasta. Oh! The beasts . . .

The Drunk. Madam, what ever are you at

With this holy marriage?

[*During what follows, JOCASTA, bewildered, goes to the window on tip-toe. Then she returns to the bed, and leaning over OEDIPUS, watches his face, but still looking from time to time in the direction of the window, where the voice of the DRUNK alternates with the murmur of the fountain and the cockcrows. She lulls the sleep of OEDIPUS by gently rocking the cradle*]

The Drunk. Now, if I were in politics . . . I'd say to the queen: Madam! . . . a minor can't be your man. . . . Take a husband who's serious, sober, and strong . . . a husband like me. . . .

Voice of the Guard [*who has just awakened. He gradually recovers his self-assurance*] Move on!

Voice of the Drunk. Salute the waking army! . . .

The Guard. Move on! And look sharp!

The Drunk. You might at least be polite. . . .

[*As soon as the GUARD is heard, JOCASTA leaves the cradle, having first muffled OEDIPUS' head in the muslin*]

The Guard. D'you want me to stop your mouth?

The Drunk. Always politics! What a mess!

Madam, what ever are you at? . . .

The Guard. Come on, hop it! Clear off! . . .

The Drunk. I'm clearing off, I'm clearing off, but you might be polite about it.

[During these remarks, JOCASTA goes to the mirror. She cannot see herself owing to the moonlight conflicting with the dawn. She takes the mirror by its supports and moves it away from the wall. The mirror itself stays fastened to the scenery. JOCASTA drags the frame along, trying to get some light, glancing at OEDIPUS who sleeps on. She brings the piece of furniture carefully into the foreground, opposite the prompter's box, so that the public becomes her mirror and JOCASTA looks at herself in full view of all]

The Drunk [very distant].

Your husband's much too young,
Much too young for you, that's
flat! . . . Flat! . . .

[Sound of the SENTRY's footsteps, bugle-calls, cockcrows, a kind of snoring noise from the rhythmic, youthful breathing of OEDIPUS. JOCASTA, with her face up against the empty mirror, lifts her cheeks by handfuls]

ACT FOUR

OEDIPUS REX

(17 years later)

The Voice. Seventeen years soon pass. The great plague in Thebes seems to be the first set-back to that renowned good luck of Oedipus. For their infernal machine to work properly, the gods wanted all ill-luck to appear in the guise of good luck. After delusive good fortune, the king is to know true misfortune and supreme consecration, which, in the hands of the cruel gods, makes of this playing-card king, in the end, a man.

Cleared of the bedroom, the red hangings of which are pulled away into the flies, the platform seems to be surrounded by walls which grow in size. It finally represents an inner courtyard. By a balcony high up JOCASTA's room is made to communicate with this court. One gets to it through an open door below, in the centre.

When the curtain rises, OEDIPUS, aged, and wearing a little beard, stands near to the door. TIRESIAS and CREON are standing on the right and left of the court. Centre right, a young boy rests one knee on the ground: he is the MESSENGER from Corinth.

Oedipus. What have I done to shock people now, Tiresias?

Tiresias. You are enlarging on things, as usual. I think, and I'll say again, it might be more decent to learn of a father's death with less joy.

Oedipus. Indeed. [To the MESSENGER] Don't be afraid, boy. Tell me, what was the cause of Polybius' death? Is Merope so very terribly unhappy?

Messenger. King Polybius died of old age, my lord, and . . . the queen, his wife, is barely conscious. She is so old she can't fully realize even her misfortune.

Oedipus [his hand to his mouth]. Jocasta! Jocasta!

[JOCASTA appears on the balcony; she parts the curtain. She is wearing her red scarf]

Jocasta. What is it?

Oedipus. How pale you are! Don't you feel well?

Jocasta. I admit that what with the plague, the heat, and visits to the hospitals I feel quite exhausted. I was resting on my bed.

Oedipus. This messenger has brought me great news, worth disturbing you for.

Jocasta [astonished]. Good news? . . .

Oedipus. Tiresias blames me for finding it good: My father is dead.

Jocasta. Oedipus!

Oedipus. The oracle told me I should be his murderer, and that I should be the husband of my mother. Poor Merope! she is very old, and my father, Polybius, has died a good natural death!

Jocasta. The death of a father is never a happy event, as far as I know.

Oedipus. I hate play-acting and conventional tears. To be quite genuine, I was so young when I left my father and mother, that I no longer have any particular feelings for them.

Messenger. Lord Oedipus, if I may. . . .

Oedipus. You may, my boy.

Messenger. Your indifference is not really indifference. I can explain it to you.

Oedipus. Something new.

Messenger. I ought to have begun at the end of the story. On his death-bed, the king of Corinth asked me to tell you that you are only his adopted son.

Oedipus. What?

Messenger. My father, one of Polybius' shepherds, found you on a hill, at the mercy

of wild beasts. He was a poor man; he carried his find to the queen who used to weep because she had no children. This is how the honour of performing such an extraordinary mission at the Theban court has fallen to me.

Tiresias. This young man must be exhausted after his journey, and he has crossed our town which is full of unhealthy stench. Perhaps it would be better if he took some refreshment and rested before being questioned.

Oedipus. No doubt, *Tiresias*, you would like the torture to last. You think my world is tottering. You don't know me well enough. Don't you rejoice too soon. Perhaps I am happy to be a child of fortune.

Tiresias. I was only putting you on your guard against your sinister habit of questioning, seeking to know and understand everything.

Oedipus. Whether I am a child of the muses or of a common tramp, I shall question without fear; I will know things.

Jocasta. Oedipus, my love, he is right. You get excited. . . . You get excited . . . and you believe everything you're told, and then afterwards. . . .

Oedipus. Upon my word! That's the last straw! Unflinchingly I withstand the hardest knocks, and you all plot to make me put up with these things and not try to find out where I come from.

Jocasta. Nobody is plotting . . . my love . . . but I know. . . .

Oedipus. You're wrong, *Jocasta*. Nobody knows me at present, neither you, nor I, nor any one else. [*To the MESSENGER*] Don't tremble, my lad. Speak up. Tell us more.

Messenger. That's all I know, Lord Oedipus, except that my father untied you when you were half-dead, hanging by your wounded feet from a short branch.

Oedipus. Oh! so that's how we came by those fine scars!

Jocasta. Oedipus, Oedipus, dear . . . come up here. . . . Anybody would think you enjoy plunging knives into your wounds.

Oedipus. And so those were my swaddling clothes! . . . My story of the hunt is . . . false, like so many others. Well, if that's the way things are. . . . I may come of a god of the woods and a dryad,

and have been nourished by wolves. Don't you rejoice too soon, *Tiresias*!

Tiresias. You do me an injustice. . . .

Oedipus. At any rate, I haven't killed Polybius, but . . . now I come to think of it . . . I have killed a man.

Jocasta. You!

Oedipus. Yes! I! Oh! you needn't be alarmed. It was accidental, and sheer bad luck! Yes, I have killed, soothsayer, but as for parricide, you'd better officially give it up. During a brawl with the serving-men, I killed an old man at the cross-roads of Delphi and Daulis.

Jocasta. At the cross-roads of Delphi and Daulis! . . .

[*She disappears as if drowning*]

Oedipus. There's marvellous material for you to build up a really fine catastrophe. That traveller must have been my father. "Heavens, my father!" But incest won't be so easy, gentlemen. What do you think, *Jocasta*? . . . [*He turns round and sees JOCASTA has disappeared*] Splendid! Seventeen years of happiness, and a perfect reign, two sons, two daughters, and then this noble lady only has to learn that I am the stranger whom, by the way, she first loved, and she turns her back on me. Let her sulk! Let her sulk! I shall be left alone with my fate.

Creon. Your wife, Oedipus, is ill. The plague is demoralizing us all. The gods are punishing the town and desire a victim. A monster is hiding in our midst. They demand he shall be found and driven out. Day after day the police have failed and the streets are littered with corpses. Do you realize what an effort you are asking of *Jocasta*? Do you realize that you are a man and that she is a woman, an aging woman at that, and a mother who is disturbed about the contagion? Before blaming *Jocasta* for a movement of impatience, you might have tried to excuse her.

Oedipus. I see what you are getting at, brother. The ideal victim, the monster in hiding. . . . From one coincidence to another . . . wouldn't it be a pretty job, with the help of the priests and the police, to succeed in muddling the people of Thebes and make them believe I am that monster!

Creon. Don't be absurd.

Oedipus. I think you're capable of anything, my friend. But *Jocasta*, that's another matter. . . . I am astonished at her

attitude. [*He calls her*] Jocasta! Jocasta! Where are you?

Tiresias. She looked as though her nerves were all on edge. She is resting . . . let her be.

Oedipus. I am going. . . . [*He goes toward the MESSENGER*] Now, let us come to the point. . . .

Messenger. My lord!

Oedipus. Holes in my feet . . . bound . . . on the mountain-side. . . . How did I fail to understand at once? . . . And then I wondered why Jocasta. . . .

It's very hard to give up enigmas. . . . Gentlemen, I was not the son of a dryad. Allow me to introduce you to the son of a linen-maid, a child of the people, a native product.

Creon. What's this all about?

Oedipus. Poor Jocasta! One day I unwittingly told her what I thought of my mother. . . . I understand everything now. She must be terrified, and utterly desperate. In short . . . wait for me. I must question her at all costs, leaving nothing in the dark, so that this horrible farce may come to an end.

[*He leaves by the middle door. CREON immediately rushes to the MESSENGER, whom he pushes out through the door on the right*]

Creon. He is mad. What does all this mean?

Tiresias. Don't move. A storm is coming to us from the most distant ages. The thunderbolt is aimed at this man, and I ask you, Creon, to let the thunderbolt follow its whims, to wait motionless and not to interfere in the slightest.

[*Suddenly OEDIPUS is seen on the balcony, stranded and aghast. He leans on the wall with one hand*]

Oedipus. You have killed her for me.

Creon. What do you mean, killed?

Oedipus. You have killed her for me. . . . That's where she is, hanging . . . hanging by her scarf. . . . She is dead . . . gentlemen, she is dead. . . . It's all over . . . all over.

Creon. Dead? I'm coming. . . .

Tiresias. Stay here . . . the priest orders you to. It's inhuman, I know; but the circle is closing; we must keep silent and please stay here. . . .

Creon. You wouldn't stop a brother from. . . .

Tiresias. I would! Let the story be. Keep out of it.

Oedipus [*at the door*]. You have killed her for me . . . she was romantic . . . weak . . . ill . . . you forced me to say I was a murderer. . . . Whom did I murder, gentlemen, I ask you? . . . through clumsiness, mere clumsiness . . . just an old man on the road . . . a stranger.

Tiresias. Oedipus: through mere clumsiness you have murdered Jocasta's husband, King Laius.

Oedipus. Mean wretches! . . . I can see it now! You are carrying on your plot! . . . it was even worse than I thought. . . . You have made my poor Jocasta believe that I was the murderer of Laius . . . that I killed the king to set her free and so that I could marry her.

Tiresias. Oedipus, you have murdered Jocasta's husband, King Laius. I have known it for a long time, and you are telling lies. I haven't said a word about it either to you or to her or to Creon or to any one else. This is how you reward me for my silence.

Oedipus. Laius! . . . So that's it. . . . I am the son of Laius and of the linen-maid. The son of Jocasta's foster-sister and Laius.

Tiresias [*to CREON*]. If you want to now's the time. Quickly. There are limits even to harshness.

Creon. Oedipus, through you, my sister is dead. I only kept silent to save the life of Jocasta. I think it is useless to prolong unnecessarily the false mystery and the unravelling of a sordid drama whose intrigue I have finally succeeded in discovering.

Oedipus. Intrigue?

Creon. The most secret of secrets are betrayed one day or another to the determined seeker. The honest man, sworn to silence, talks to his wife, who talks to an intimate friend, and so on. [*In to the wings*] Come in, shepherd.

[*An old SHEPHERD comes in, trembling*]

Oedipus. Who is this man?

Creon. The man who carried you bleeding and bound onto the mountain-side according to your mother's orders. Let him confess.

Shepherd. To speak means death to me. Princes, why haven't I died before so as not to live through this minute?

Oedipus. Whose son am I, old man? Strike, strike, quickly!

Shepherd. Alas.

Oedipus. I am near to the sound of something that should not be heard.

Shepherd. And I . . . to the saying of something that should not be said.

Creon. You must say it. I wish you to.

Shepherd. You are the son of Jocasta, your wife, and of Laius, killed by you where the three roads cross. Incest and parricide, may the gods forgive you!

Oedipus. I have killed whom I should not. I have married whom I should not. I have perpetuated what I should not. All is clear. . . . *[He goes out]*

[CREON drives out the SHEPHERD]

Creon. Who was the linen-maid and foster-sister he was talking about?

Tiresias. Women cannot hold their tongues. Jocasta must have made out that her crime had been committed by a servant to see what effect it had on Oedipus.

[He holds his arm and listens with bent head. Forbidding murmur. The little ANTIGONE, with hair dishevelled, appears on the balcony]

Antigone. Uncle! Tiresias! Come up, quickly! Hurry, it's horrible! I heard shrieks inside; mother dear doesn't move any more, she has fallen like a log, and father dear is writhing over her body and stabbing at his eyes with her big golden brooch. There's blood everywhere. I'm frightened! I'm too frightened, come up . . . come up, quickly. . . .

[She goes in]

Creon. This time nothing shall prevent me. . . .

Tiresias. Yes, I shall. I tell you, Creon, the finishing touches are being put to a masterpiece of horror. Not a word, not a gesture. It would be unkind for us to cast over it so much as a shadow of ourselves.

Creon. Sheer madness!

Tiresias. Sheer wisdom. . . . You must admit. . . .

Creon. Impossible. As for the rest, power falls once more into my hands.

[He frees himself, and at the very moment when he bounds forward, the door opens. OEDIPUS appears, blind.

ANTIGONE is clinging to his clothes]

Tiresias. Stop!

Creon. I shall go mad! Why, but why has he done that? Better have killed himself.

Tiresias. His pride does not let him down.

He wanted to be the happiest of men, now he wants to be the most unhappy.

Oedipus. Let them drive me out, let them finish me off, stone me, strike down the foul beast!

Antigone. Father!

Tiresias. Antigone! My soothsaying staff! Offer it to him from me. It will bring him some luck.

[ANTIGONE kisses the hand of TIRESIAS and carries the staff to Oedipus]

Antigone. Tiresias offers you his staff.

Oedipus. Is he there? . . . I accept it, Tiresias. . . . I accept it. . . . Do you remember, eighteen years ago, I saw in your eyes that I should become blind and I couldn't understand it? I see it all clearly now, Tiresias, but I am in pain. . . . I suffer. . . . The journey will be hard.

Creon. We must not let him cross the town, it would be an awful scandal.

Tiresias. *[in a low voice].* In a town of plague? And besides, you know, they saw the king Oedipus wished to be; they won't see the king he is now.

Creon. Do you mean he will be invisible because he is blind?

Tiresias. Almost.

Creon. Well, I can tell you I have had enough of your riddles and symbols. My head is firmly fixed on my shoulders and my feet planted firmly on the ground. I shall give orders.

Tiresias. Your police may be well organized, Creon; but where this man goes they will not have the slightest power.

Creon. I. . . .

[TIRESIAS seizes his arm and puts his hand over his mouth. . . . For JOCASTA appears in the doorway. JOCASTA, dead, white, beautiful, with closed eyes. Her long scarf is wound round her neck]

Oedipus. Jocasta! You, dear! You alive!

Jocasta. No, Oedipus. I am dead. You can see me because you are blind; the others cannot see me.

Oedipus. Tiresias is blind. . . .

Jocasta. Perhaps he can see me faintly . . . but he loves me, he won't say anything. . . .

Oedipus. Wife, do not touch me! . . .

Jocasta. Your wife is dead, hanged, Oedipus. I am your mother. It's your mother who is coming to help you. . . . How

would you even get down these steps alone, my poor child?

Oedipus. Mother!

Jocasta. Yes, my child, my little boy. . . . Things which appear abominable to human beings, if only you knew, from the place where I live, if only you knew how unimportant they are!

Oedipus. I am still on this earth.

Jocasta. Only just. . . .

Creon. He is talking with phantoms, he's delirious. I shall not allow that little girl. . . .

Tiresias. They are in good care.

Creon. Antigone! Antigone! I am calling you. . . .

Antigone. I don't want to stay with my uncle! I don't want to, I don't want to stay in the house. Dear father, dear father, don't leave me! I will show you the way, I will lead you. . . .

Creon. Thankless creature.

Oedipus. Impossible, Antigone. You must be a good girl. . . . I cannot take you with me.

Antigone. Yes, you can!

Oedipus. Are you going to desert your sister Ismene?

Antigone. She must stay with Eteocles and Polynices. Take me away, please! Please! Don't leave me alone! Don't leave me with uncle! Don't leave me at home!

Jocasta. The child is so pleased with herself. She imagines she is your guide. Let her think she is. Take her. Leave everything to me.

Oedipus. Oh! . . .

[*He puts his hand to his head*]

Jocasta. Are you suffering, dear?

Oedipus. Yes, in the head, the neck, the arms. . . . It's fearful.

Jocasta. I'll give you a dressing at the fountain.

Oedipus [*breaking down*]. Mother. . . .

Jocasta. Who would have believed it? That wicked old scarf and that terrible brooch! Didn't I say so time and again?

Creon. It's utterly impossible. I shall not allow a mad-man to go out free with Antigone. It is my duty to. . . .

Tiresias. Duty! They no longer belong to you; they no longer come under your authority.

Creon. And pray whom should they belong to?

Tiresias. To the people, poets and unspoiled souls.

Jocasta. Forward! Grip my dress firmly . . . don't be afraid.

[*They start off*]

Antigone. Come along, father dear . . . let's go. . . .

Oedipus. Where do the steps begin?

Jocasta and Antigone. There is the whole of the platform yet. . . .

[*They disappear . . . JOCASTA and ANTIGONE speak in perfect unison*]

Jocasta and Antigone. Careful . . . count the steps. . . . One, two, three, four, five. . . .

Creon. And even supposing they leave the town, who will look after them, who will admit them?

Tiresias. Glory.

Creon. You mean rather dishonour, shame. . . .

Tiresias. Who knows?

THE END

MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL

By T. S. ELIOT

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ELIOT AND THE POETIC THEATRE

THOMAS STEARNS ELIOT, poet, critic, editor, and playwright, was born in St. Louis in 1888. Since graduation from Harvard University, however, he has lived and worked almost continually in England and is properly considered a British playwright. Of his influential career as poet and critic it is hardly necessary to speak: with Ezra Pound he has been the model for a whole school of modern poets; as critic he has established many of the modern critical techniques and created much of the vocabulary of the "New Criticism."

Although the drama had been a critical preoccupation with Eliot for many years, and although he had published a "fragment of an Aristophanic melodrama," *Sweeney Agonistes*, in 1932, his first actual contribution to a produced theatre piece were some choruses written for a religious pageant, *The Rock*, in 1934. On the strength of their success, he accepted an invitation to write a religious drama for performance in Canterbury, the result being *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935).

Eliot's early plays are, among other things, interesting examples of the attempt in the mid-thirties to find a suitable dramatic form for modern poetry, very much as the poets of the Romantic Revival from Wordsworth to Shelley had sought to revive poetic drama in the early nineteenth century. The modern poets, however, have had greater practical success—their plays have been produced, and even re-produced. If none is likely to become an item of the standard repertory, at least the experiments of such men as Eliot, Stephen Spender, W. H. Auden, and Christopher Isherwood have extended the limits of drama and made audiences aware once more of the power of poetic speech. The enthusiastic support of such producing groups as the Westminster and Mercury theatres in London and the college and little theatres of America has been an added factor in the comparative success of the movement.

Mr. Eliot in his early critical discussions of the Elizabethan playwrights and particularly in his "Dialogue on Dramatic Poesy," raised the questions which confront the poet in the modern theatre: the search for suitable subject matter to present to an audience jaded by realism, social problems, and marital triangles; the search for a modern poetic medium free of the patina of antiquity (blank verse, heroic couplet), free also of the shackles of prosaic inarticulateness. For *Murder in the Cathedral*, the historical nature of whose subject was already perilously close to the museum, Eliot chose a verse form as far as possible from the Shakespearean yet especially appropriate for the story of a medieval priest: the loose metrical line of *Everyman*, the famous morality play. And in his treatment of the subject, the playwright chose to emphasize not the romantic bustle of a particular history (as in Tennyson's nineteenth-century version), but the inner struggle of a hero in quest of an elusive, perhaps illusionary goal—a theme of timeless rather than timely importance.

It was Eliot's own poem, *The Wasteland* (1922), that established the outlines of the life of unquiet desperation led by modern man, a life without goals, without values, a life of trivial incident, of fears named and nameless. *Sweeney Agonistes* is, to a certain extent, a dramatization of this view of life. But with *Murder in the Cathedral* Eliot begins to find a way out of the wasteland, a way which becomes more firmly indicated in his later plays, *The Family Reunion* (1939), and *The Cocktail Party* (1949).

Although *Murder in the Cathedral* is the first of the poet's attempts to establish a tradition of poetic drama for the modern theatre, it is not the least interesting. It has, to be sure, visible defects: a chorus is not only an unfamiliar device in contemporary drama, it is unnecessary, since the modern theatre has developed instruments of its own to perform the functions of the ancient chorus; the necessary anonymity of all save the central character (an expressionistic device) tends to cast a chill over the play, to abstract its human appeal in favor of intellectual debate. On the other hand, and more importantly, the play demonstrates the power of verse by its controlled rhythms, its assonances, its memorable verbal echoes to characterize (cf. the nameless tempters), to increase and relax tension (cf. Thomas and the Knights), to carry the action suddenly from the historical situation to the inward universal consciousness (cf. the Fourth Tempter's repetition of Thomas', "You know and do not know, what it is to act or suffer," etc.).

In his later plays, Mr. Eliot has boldly abandoned the costumes and characters of history for the drawing rooms and offices of contemporary society. He has continued his experiments with verse dialogue, developing the effects achieved in *Murder in the Cathedral*

with increasing subtlety. While many of his audience no doubt prefer to be made pleasantly aware of the difference between poetic speech and the conventional prose, it is a fact that the frequently prosaic speech of *The Cocktail Party* brought Mr. Eliot his widest audience and resulted in the most successful verse play in the English-speaking theatre of the past century.

Murder in the Cathedral was produced at Canterbury in 1935. It was later performed by the Mercury Theater in London, with Robert Speaight in the role of Thomas, and by the Federal Theater in New York, with Harry Irvine. In the film version, Mr. Eliot himself is heard in an off-screen speech.

MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL

PART I

CHARACTERS

A CHORUS OF WOMEN OF CANTERBURY
THREE PRIESTS OF THE CATHEDRAL

A HERALD

ARCHBISHOP THOMAS BECKET

FOUR TEMPTERS

ATTENDANTS

*The Scene is the Archbishop's Hall, on
December 2nd, 1170*

Chorus. Here let us stand, close by the
cathedral. Here let us wait.
Are we drawn by danger? Is it the knowl-
edge of safety, that draws our feet
Towards the cathedral? What danger can
be
For us, the poor, the poor women of Canter-
bury? what tribulation
With which we are not already familiar?
There is no danger
For us, and there is no safety in the cath-
edral. Some presage of an act
Which our eyes are compelled to witness,
has forced our feet
Towards the cathedral. We are forced to
bear witness.

Since golden October declined into sombre
November
And the apples were gathered and stored,
and the land became brown sharp points
of death in a waste of water and mud,
The New Year waits, breathes, waits, whis-
pers in darkness.
While the labourer kicks off a muddy boot
and stretches his hand to the fire,
The New Year waits, destiny waits for the
coming.
Who has stretched out his hand to the fire
and remembered the Saints at All Hal-
lows,
Remembered the martyrs and saints who
wait? and who shall
Stretch out his hand to the fire, and deny
his master? who shall be warm
By the fire, and deny his master?

Seven years and the summer is over
Seven years since the Archbishop left us,
He who was always kind to his people.
But it would not be well if he should re-
turn.

King rules or barons rule;
We have suffered various oppression,
But mostly we are left to our own devices,
And we are content if we are left alone.
We try to keep our households in order;
The merchant, shy and cautious, tries to
compile a little fortune,
And the labourer bends to his piece of earth,
earth-colour, his own colour,
Preferring to pass unobserved.

Now I fear disturbance of the quiet seasons:
Winter shall come bringing death from the
sea,

Ruinous spring shall beat at our doors,
Root and shoot shall eat our eyes and our
ears,

Disastrous summer burn up the beds of our
streams

And the poor shall wait for another decay-
ing October.

Why should the summer bring consolation
For autumn fires and winter fogs?

What shall we do in the heat of summer
But wait in barren orchards for another
October?

Some malady is coming upon us. We wait,
we wait,

And the saints and martyrs wait, for those
who shall be martyrs and saints.

Destiny waits in the hand of God, shaping
the still unshapen:

I have seen these things in a shaft of sun-
light.

Destiny waits in the hand of God, not in the
hands of statesmen

Who do, some well, some ill, planning and
guessing,

Having their aims which turn in their hands
in the pattern of time.

Come, happy December, who shall observe
you, who shall preserve you?

Shall the Son of Man be born again in the
litter of scorn?

For us, the poor, there is no action,
But only to wait and to witness.

[Enter PRIESTS]

First Priest. Seven years and the summer is over.

Seven years since the Archbishop left us.

Second Priest. What does the Archbishop do, and our Sovereign Lord the Pope With the stubborn King and the French King

In ceaseless intrigue, combinations,
In conference, meetings accepted, meetings refused,

Meetings unended or endless
At one place or another in France?

Third Priest. I see nothing quite conclusive in the art of temporal government,
But violence, duplicity and frequent malversation.

King rules or barons rule:
The strong man strongly and the weak man by caprice.

They have but one law, to seize the power and keep it,
And the steadfast can manipulate the greed and lust of others,

The feeble is devoured by his own.

First Priest. Shall these things not end
Until the poor at the gate
Have forgotten their friend, their Father in God, have forgotten
That they had a friend?

[Enter HERALD]

Herald. Servants of God, and watchers of the temple,

I am here to inform you, without circumlocution:

The Archbishop is in England, and is close outside the city.

I was sent before in haste

To give you notice of his coming, as much as was possible,

That you may prepare to meet him.

First Priest. What, is the exile ended, is our Lord Archbishop

Reunited with the King? what reconciliation

Of two proud men? what peace can be found
To grow between the hammer and the anvil? Tell us,

Are the old disputes at an end, is the wall of pride cast down

That divided them? Is it peace or war?
Does he come

In full assurance, or only secure

In the power of Rome, the spiritual rule,
The assurance of right, and the love of the people,

Contemning the hatred and envy of barons?
Herald. You are right to express a certain incredulity.

He comes in pride and sorrow, affirming all his claims,

Assured, beyond doubt, of the devotion of the people,

Who receive him with scenes of frenzied enthusiasm,

Lining the road and throwing down their capes,

Strewing the way with leaves and late flowers of the season.

The streets of the city will be packed to suffocation,

And I think that his horse will be deprived of its tail,

A single hair of which becomes a precious relic.

He is at one with the Pope, and with the King of France,

Who indeed would have liked to detain him in his kingdom:

But as for our King, that is another matter.

First Priest. But again, is it war or peace?

Herald. Peace, but not the kiss of peace.
A patched up affair, if you ask my opinion.
And if you ask me, I think the Lord Archbishop

Is not the man to cherish any illusions,
Or yet to diminish the least of his pretensions.

If you ask my opinion, I think that this peace

Is nothing like an end, or like a beginning.

It is common knowledge that when the Archbishop

Parted from the King, he said to the King,
My Lord, he said, I leave you as a man

Whom in this life I shall not see again.
I have this, I assure you, on the highest authority;

There are several opinions as to what he meant

But no one considers it a happy prognostic.
[Exit]

First Priest. I fear for the Archbishop,
I fear for the Church,

I know that the pride bred of sudden prosperity

Was but confirmed by bitter adversity.
I saw him as Chancellor, flattered by the King,

Liked or feared by courtiers, in their overbearing fashion,

Despised and despising, always isolated,
Never one among them, always insecure;
His pride always feeding upon his own
virtues,

Pride drawing sustenance from impartiality,
Pride drawing sustenance from generosity,
Loathing power given by temporal devolution,

Wishing subjection to God alone.

Had the King been greater, or had he been
weaker

Things had perhaps been different for
Thomas.

Second Priest. Yet our lord is returned.
Our lord has come back to his own
again.

We have had enough of waiting, from December to dismal December.

The Archbishop shall be at our head, dispelling dismay and doubt.

He will tell us what we are to do, he will give us our orders, instruct us.

Our Lord is at one with the Pope, and also the King of France.

We can lean on a rock, we can feel a firm foothold

Against the perpetual wash of tides of balance of forces of barons and landholders.

The rock of God is beneath our feet. Let us meet the Archbishop with cordial thanksgiving:

Our lord, our Archbishop returns. And when the Archbishop returns

Our doubts are dispelled. Let us therefore rejoice,

I say rejoice, and show a glad face for his welcome.

I am the Archbishop's man. Let us give the Archbishop welcome!

Third Priest. For good or ill, let the wheel turn.

The wheel has been still, these seven years, and no good.

For ill or good, let the wheel turn.

For who knows the end of good or evil?

Until the grinders cease

And the door shall be shut in the street,

And all the daughters of music shall be brought low.

Chorus. Here is no continuing city, here is no abiding stay.

Ill the wind, ill the time, uncertain the profit, certain the danger.

O late late late, late is the time, late too late, and rotten the year;

Evil the wind, and bitter the sea, and grey the sky, grey grey grey.

O Thomas, return, Archbishop; return, return to France.

Return. Quickly. Quietly. Leave us to perish in quiet.

You come with applause, you come with rejoicing, but you come bringing death into Canterbury:

A doom on the house, a doom on yourself, a doom on the world.

We do not wish anything to happen.

Seven years we have lived quietly,

Succeeded in avoiding notice,

Living and partly living.

There have been oppression and luxury,

There have been poverty and license,

There has been minor injustice.

Yet we have gone on living,

Living and partly living.

Sometimes the corn has failed us,

Sometimes the harvest is good,

One year is a year of rain,

Another a year of dryness,

One year the apples are abundant,

Another year the plums are lacking.

Yet we have gone on living,

Living and partly living.

We have kept the feasts, heard the masses,

We have brewed beer and cyder,

Gathered wood against the winter,

Talked at the corner of the fire,

Talked at the corners of streets,

Talked not always in whispers,

Living and partly living.

We have seen births, deaths and marriages,

We have had various scandals,

We have been afflicted with taxes,

We have had laughter and gossip,

Several girls have disappeared

Unaccountably, and some not able to.

We have all had our private terrors,

Our particular shadows, our secret fears.

But now a great fear is upon us, a fear not of one but of many,

A fear like birth and death, when we see birth and death alone

In a void apart. We

Are afraid in a fear which we cannot know, which we cannot face, which none understands,

And our hearts are torn from us, our brains unskinned like the layers of an onion, our selves are lost lost

In a final fear which none understands. O
Thomas Archbishop,

O Thomas our Lord, leave us and leave us
be, in our humble and tarnished frame
of existence, leave us; do not ask us
To stand to the doom on the house, the
doom on the Archbishop, the doom on
the world.

Archbishop, secure and assured of your fate,
unaffrayed among the shades, do you
realise what you ask, do you realise
what it means

To the small folk drawn into the pattern of
fate, the small folk who live among
small things,

The strain on the brain of the small folk
who stand to the doom of the house,
the doom of their lord, the doom of the
world?

O Thomas, Archbishop, leave us, leave us,
leave sullen Dover, and set sail for
France. Thomas our Archbishop still
our Archbishop even in France.
Thomas Archbishop, set the white sail
between the grey sky and the bitter sea,
leave us, leave us for France.

Second Priest. What a way to talk at
such a juncture!

You are foolish, immodest and babbling
women.

Do you not know that the good Archbishop
Is likely to arrive at any moment?

The crowds in the streets will be cheering
and cheering,

You go on croaking like frogs in the tree-
tops:

But frogs at least can be cooked and eaten.
Whatever you are afraid of, in your craven
apprehension,

Let me ask you at the least to put on pleas-
ant faces,

And give a hearty welcome to our good
Archbishop.

[*Enter THOMAS*]

Thomas. Peace. And let them be, in their
exaltation.

They speak better than they know, and be-
yond your understanding.

They know and do not know, what it is to
act or suffer.

They know and do not know, that acting is
suffering

And suffering is action. Neither does the
actor suffer

Nor the patient act. But both are fixed
In an eternal action, an eternal patience

To which all must consent that it may be
willed

And which all must suffer that they may will
it,

That the pattern may subsist, for the pat-
tern is the action

And the suffering, that the wheel may turn
and still

Be forever still.

Second Priest. O my Lord, forgive me, I
did not see you coming,

Engrossed by the chatter of these foolish
women.

Forgive us, my Lord, you would have had a
better welcome

If we had been sooner prepared for the
event.

But your Lordship knows that seven years
of waiting,

Seven years of prayer, seven years of empti-
ness,

Have better prepared our hearts for your
coming,

Than seven days could make ready Canter-
bury.

However, I will have fires laid in all your
rooms

To take the chill off our English December.
Your Lordship now being used to a better
climate.

Your Lordship will find your rooms in order
as you left them.

Thomas. And will try to leave them in
order as I find them.

I am more than grateful for all your kind
attentions.

These are small matters. Little rest in Can-
terbury

With eager enemies restless about us.

Rebellious bishops, York, London, Salisbury,
Would have intercepted our letters,

Filled the coast with spies and sent to meet
me

Some who hold me in bitterest hate.

By God's grace aware of their prevision

I sent my letters on another day,

Had fair crossing, found at Sandwich

Broc, Warene, and the Sheriff of Kent,

Those who had sworn to have my head
from me.

Only John, the Dean of Salisbury,

Fearing for the King's name, warning against
treason,

Made them hold their hands. So for the
time

We are unmolested.

First Priest. But do they follow after?
Thomas. For a little time the hungry hawk

Will only soar and hover, circling lower,
 Waiting excuse, pretence, opportunity.
 End will be simple, sudden, God-given.
 Meanwhile the substance of our first act
 Will be shadows, and the strife with shadows.
 Heavier the interval than the consummation.

All things prepare the event. Watch.

[*Enter FIRST TEMPTER*]

First Tempter. You see, my Lord, I do not wait upon ceremony:
 Here I have come, forgetting all acrimony,
 Hoping that your present gravity
 Will find excuse for my humble levity
 Remembering all the good time past.
 Your Lordship won't despise an old friend
 out of favour?

Old Tom, gay Tom, Becket of London,
 Your Lordship won't forget that evening on the river

When the King, and you and I were all friends together?

Friendship should be more than biting Time can sever.

What, my Lord, now that you recover
 Favour with the King, shall we say that summer's over

Or that the good time cannot last?
 Fluting in the meadows, violets in the hall,
 Laughter and apple-blossom floating on the water,

Singing at nightfall, whispering in chambers,
 Fires devouring the winter season,
 Eating up the darkness, with wit and wine and wisdom!

Now that the King and you are in amity,
 Clergy and laity may return to gaiety,
 Mirth and sportfulness need not walk warily.

Thomas. You talk of seasons that are past. I remember

Not worth forgetting.

Tempter. And of the new season.
 Spring has come in winter. Snow in the branches
 Shall float as sweet as blossoms. Ice along the ditches

Mirror the sunlight. Love in the orchard
 Send the sap shooting. Mirth matches melancholy.

Thomas. We do not know very much of the future

Except that from generation to generation
 The same things happen again and again.
 Men learn little from others' experience.
 But in the life of one man, never
 The same time returns. Sever
 The cord, shed the scale. Only
 The fool, fixed in his folly, may think
 He can turn the wheel on which he turns.

Tempter. My Lord, a nod is as good as a wink.

A man will often love what he spurns.
 For the good times past, that are come again
 I am your man.

Thomas. Not in this train.

Look to your behaviour. You were safer
 Think of penitence and follow your master.

Tempter. Not at this gait!

If you go so fast, others may go faster.

Your Lordship is too proud!

The safest beast is not the one that roars
 most loud.

This was not the way of the King our master!

You were not used to be so hard upon sinners

When they were your friends. Be easy, man!

The easy man lives to eat the best dinners.
 Take a friend's advice. Leave well alone,
 Or your goose may be cooked and eaten to the bone.

Thomas. You come twenty years too late.

Tempter. Then I leave you to your fate.
 I leave you to the pleasures of your higher vices,

Which will have to be paid for at higher prices.

Farewell, my Lord, I do not wait upon ceremony,

I leave as I came, forgetting all acrimony,
 Hoping that your present gravity
 Will find excuse for my humble levity.

If you will remember me, my Lord, at your prayers,

I'll remember you at kissing-time below the stairs.

Thomas. Leave-well-alone, the spring-time fancy,
 So one thought goes whistling down the wind.

The impossible is still temptation.
 The impossible, the undesirable,
 Voices under sleep, waking a dead world,
 So that the mind may not be whole in the present.

[*Enter SECOND TEMPTER*]

Second Tempter. Your Lordship has forgotten me, perhaps. I will remind you. We met at Clarendon, at Northampton, And last at Montmirail, in Maine. Now that I have recalled them, Let us but set these not too pleasant memories In balance against other, earlier And weightier ones: those of the Chancellorship. See how the late ones rise! The master of policy Whom all acknowledged, should guide the state again.

Thomas. Your meaning?

Tempter. The Chancellorship that you resigned When you were made Archbishop—that was a mistake On your part—still may be regained. Think, my Lord, Power obtained grows to glory, Life lasting, a permanent possession, A templed tomb, monument of marble. Rule over men reckon no madness.

Thomas. To the man of God what gladness?

Tempter. Sadness

Only to those giving love to God alone. Fare forward, shun two files of shadows: Mirth merrymaking, melting strength in sweetness, Fiddling to feebleness, doomed to disdain; And godlovers' longings, lost in God. Shall he who held the solid substance Wander waking with deceitful shadows? Power is present. Holiness hereafter.

Thomas. Who then?

Tempter. The Chancellor. King and Chancellor.

King commands. Chancellor richly rules. This is a sentence not taught in the schools. To set down the great, protect the poor, Beneath the throne of God can man do more?

Disarm the ruffian, strengthen the laws, Rule for the good of the better cause, Dispensing justice make all even, Is thrive on earth, and perhaps in heaven.

Thomas. What means?

Tempter. Real power

Is purchased at price of a certain submission. Your spiritual power is earthly perdition. Power is present, for him who will wield.

Thomas. Whose was it?

Tempter. His who is gone.

Thomas. Who shall have it?

Tempter. He who will come.

Thomas. What shall be the month?

Tempter. The last from the first.

Thomas. What shall we give for it?

Tempter. Pretence of priestly power.

Thomas. Why should we give it?

Tempter. For the power and the glory.

Thomas. No!

Tempter. Yes! Or bravery will be broken, Cabined in Canterbury, realmless ruler, Self-bound servant of a powerless Pope, The old stag, circled with hounds.

Thomas. No!

Tempter. Yes! men must manoeuvre. Monarchs also,

Waging war abroad, need fast friends at home.

Private policy is public profit; Dignity still shall be dressed with decorum.

Thomas. You forget the bishops

Whom I have laid under excommunication.

Tempter. Hungry hatred

Will not strive against intelligent self-interest.

Thomas. You forget the barons. Who will not forget

Constant curbing of pretty privilege.

Tempter. Against the barons

Is King's cause, churl's cause, Chancellor's cause.

Thomas. No! shall I, who keep the keys Of heaven and hell, supreme alone in England,

Who bind and loose, with power from the Pope,

Descend to desire a punier power?

Delegate to deal the doom of damnation,

To condemn kings, not serve among their servants,

Is my open office. No! Go.

Tempter. Then I leave you to your fate. Your sin soars sunward, covering kings' falcons.

Thomas. Temporal power, to build a good world,

To keep order, as the world knows order.

Those who put their faith in worldly order

Not controlled by the order of God,

In confident ignorance, but arrest disorder,

Make it fast, breed fatal disease,

Degrade what they exalt. Power with the King—

I was the King, his arm, his better reason.

But what was once exaltation

Would now be only mean descent.

[Enter THIRD TEMPTER]

Third Tempter. I am an unexpected visitor.

Thomas. I expected you.

Tempter. But not in this guise, or for my present purpose.

Thomas. No purpose brings surprise.

Tempter. Well, my Lord,

I am no trifter, and no politician.

To idle or intrigue at court

I have no skill. I am no courtier.

I know a horse, a dog, a wench;

I know how to hold my estates in order,

A country-keeping lord who minds his own business.

It is we country lords who know the country

And we who know what the country needs.

It is our country. We care for the country.

We are the backbone of the nation.

We, not the plotting parasites

About the King. Excuse my bluntness:

I am a rough straightforward Englishman.

Thomas. Proceed straight forward.

Tempter. Purpose is plain.

Endurance of friendship does not depend

Upon ourselves, but upon circumstance.

But circumstance is not undetermined.

Unreal friendship may turn to real

But real friendship, once ended, cannot be mended.

Sooner shall enmity turn to alliance.

The enmity that never knew friendship

Can sooner know accord.

Thomas. For a countryman

You wrap your meaning in as dark generality

As any courtier.

Tempter. This is the simple fact!

You have no hope of reconciliation

With Henry the King. You look only

To blind assertion in isolation.

That is a mistake.

Thomas. O Henry, O my King!

Tempter. Other friends

May be found in the present situation.

King in England is not all-powerful;

King is in France, squabbling in Anjou;

Round him waiting hungry sons.

We are for England. We are in England.

You and I, my Lord, are Normans.

England is a land for Norman

Sovereignty. Let the Angevin

Destroy himself, fighting in Anjou.

He does not understand us, the English barons.

We are the people.

Thomas. To what does this lead?

Tempter. To a happy coalition

Of intelligent interests.

Thomas. But what have you—

If you do speak for barons—

Tempter. For a powerful party

Which has turned its eyes in your direction—

To gain from you, your Lordship asks.

For us, Church favour would be an advantage,

Blessing of Pope powerful protection

In the fight for liberty. You, my Lord,

In being with us, would fight a good stroke

At once, for England and for Rome,

Ending the tyrannous jurisdiction

Of king's court over bishop's court,

Of king's court over baron's court.

Thomas. Which I helped to found.

Tempter. Which you helped to found.

But time past is time forgotten.

We expect the rise of a new constellation.

Thomas. And if the Archbishop cannot trust the King,

How can he trust those who work for King's undoing?

Tempter. Kings will allow no power but their own;

Church and people have good cause against the throne.

Thomas. If the Archbishop cannot trust the Throne,

He has good cause to trust none but God alone.

It is not better to be thrown

To a thousand hungry appetites than to one.

At a future time this may be shown.

I ruled once as Chancellor

And men like you were glad to wait at my door.

Not only in the court, but in the field

And in the tilt-yard I made many yield.

Shall I who ruled like an eagle over doves

Now take the shape of a wolf among wolves?

Pursue your treacheries as you have done before:

No one shall say that I betrayed a king.

Tempter. Then, my Lord, I shall not wait at your door;

And I well hope, before another spring

The King will show his regard for your loyalty.

Thomas. To make, then break, this thought has come before,
The desperate exercise of failing power.
Samson in Gaza did no more.
But if I break, I must break myself alone.

[Enter FOURTH TEMPTER]

Fourth Tempter. Well done, Thomas,
your will is hard to bend.
And with me beside you, you shall not lack
a friend.

Thomas. Who are you? I expected
Three visitors, not four.

Tempter. Do not be surprised to receive
one more.

Had I been expected, I had been here before.

I always precede expectation.

Thomas. Who are you?

Tempter. As you do not know me, I do
not need a name,
And, as you know me, that is why I come.

You know me, but have never seen my face.
To meet before was never time or place.

Thomas. Say what you come to say.

Tempter. It shall be said at last.
Hooks have been baited with morsels of the
past.

Wantonness is weakness. As for the King,
His hardened hatred shall have no end.
You know truly, the King will never trust
Twice, the man who has been his friend.

Borrow use cautiously, employ
Your services as long as you have to lend.
You would wait for trap to snap
Having served your turn, broken and
crushed.

As for barons, envy of lesser men
Is still more stubborn than king's anger.
Kings have public policy, barons private
profit,

Jealousy raging possession of the fiend.
Barons are employable against each other;
Greater enemies must kings destroy.

Thomas. What is your counsel?

Tempter. Fare forward to the end.

All other ways are closed to you
Except the way already chosen.
But what is pleasure, kingly rule,
Or rule of men beneath a king,
With craft in corners, stealthy stratagem,
To general grasp of spiritual power?
Man oppressed by sin, since Adam fell—
You hold the keys of heaven and hell.
Power to bind and loose: bind, Thomas,
bind,
King and bishop under your heel.

King, emperor, bishop, baron, king:
Uncertain mastery of melting armies,
War, plague, and revolution,
New conspiracies, broken pacts;
To be master or servant within an hour,
This is the course of temporal power.
The Old King shall know it, when at last
breath,

No sons, no empire, he bites broken teeth.
You hold the skein: wind, Thomas, wind
The thread of eternal life and death.
You hold this power, hold it.

Thomas. Supreme, in this land?

Tempter. Supreme, but for one.

Thomas. That I do not understand.

Tempter. It is not for me to tell you how
this may be so;

I am only here, Thomas, to tell you what
you know.

Thomas. How long shall this be?

Tempter. Save what you know already,
ask nothing of me.

But think, Thomas, think of glory after
death.

When king is dead, there's another king,
And one more king is another reign.
King is forgotten, when another shall come:
Saint and Martyr rule from the tomb.
Think, Thomas, think of enemies dismayed,
Creeping in penance, frightened of a shade;
Think of pilgrims, standing in line
Before the glittering jewelled shrine,
From generation to generation
Bending the knee in supplication.

Think of the miracles, by God's grace,
And think of your enemies, in another place.

Thomas. I have thought of these things.

Tempter. That is why I tell you.

Your thoughts have more power than kings
to compel you.

You have also thought, sometimes at your
prayers,

Sometimes hesitating at the angles of stairs,
And between sleep and waking, early in the
morning,

When the bird cries, have thought of further
scorning.

That nothing lasts, but the wheel turns,
The nest is rifled, and the bird mourns;
That the shrine shall be pillaged, and the
gold spent,

The jewels gone for light ladies' ornament,
The sanctuary broken, and its stores
Swept into the laps of parasites and whores.
When miracles cease, and the faithful
desert you,

And men shall only do their best to forget you.

And later is worse, when men will not hate you

Enough to defame or to execrate you,
But pondering the qualities that you lacked
Will only try to find the historical fact.

When men shall declare that there was no mystery

About this man who played a certain part in history.

Thomas. But what is there to do? what is left to be done?

Is there no enduring crown to be won?

Tempter. Yes, Thomas, yes; you have thought of that too.

What can compare with glory of Saints
Dwelling forever in presence of God?

What earthly glory, of king or emperor,

What earthly pride, that is not poverty

Compared with richness of heavenly grandeur?

Seek the way of martyrdom, make yourself the lowest

On earth, to be high in heaven.

And see far off below you, where the gulf is fixed,

Your persecutors, in timeless torment,
Parched passion, beyond expiation.

Thomas. No!

Who are you, tempting with my own desires?

Others have come, temporal tempters,
With pleasure and power at palpable price.
What do you offer? what do you ask?

Tempter. I offer what you desire. I ask
What you have to give. Is it too much
For such a vision of eternal grandeur?

Thomas. Others offered real goods,
worthless

But real. You only offer

Dreams to damnation.

Tempter. You have often dreamt them.

Thomas. Is there no way, in my soul's sickness,

Does not lead to damnation in pride?

I well know that these temptations

Mean present vanity and future torment.

Can sinful pride be driven out

Only by more sinful? Can I neither act nor suffer

Without perdition?

Tempter. You know and do not know,
what it is to act or suffer.

You know and do not know, that acting is suffering,

And suffering action. Neither does the actor suffer

Nor the patient act. But both are fixed
In an eternal action, an eternal patience
To which all must consent that it may be willed

And which all must suffer that they may will it,

That the pattern may subsist, that the wheel may turn and still

Be forever still.

Chorus. There is no rest in the house.

There is no rest in the street.

I hear restless movement of feet. And the air is heavy and thick.

Thick and heavy the sky. And the earth presses up beneath my feet.

What is the sickly smell, the vapour? the dark green light from a cloud on a withered tree? The earth is heaving to parturition of issue of hell. What is the sticky dew that forms on the back of my hand?

The Four Tempters. Man's life is a cheat and a disappointment;

All things are unreal,

Unreal or disappointing:

The Catherine wheel, the pantomime cat,

The prizes given at the children's party,

The prize awarded for the English Essay,

The scholar's degree, the statesman's decoration.

All things become less real, man passes

From unreality to unreality.

This man is obstinate, blind, intent

On self-destruction,

Passing from deception to deception,

From grandeur to grandeur to final illusion,

Lost in the wonder of his own greatness,

The enemy of society, enemy of himself.

The Three Priests. O Thomas my Lord
do not fight the intractable tide,

Do not sail the irresistible wind; in the storm,

Should we not wait for the sea to subside, in the night

Abide the coming of day, when the traveller may find his way,

The sailor lay course by the sun?

CHORUS, PRIESTS and TEMPTERS alternately

C. Is it the owl that calls, or a signal between the trees?

P. Is the window-bar made fast, is the door under lock and bolt?

T. Is it rain that taps at the window, is it wind that pokes at the door?

C. Does the torch flame in the hall, the candle in the room?

P. Does the watchman walk by the wall?

T. Does the mastiff prowl by the gate?

C. Death has a hundred hands and walks by a thousand ways.

P. He may come in the sight of all, he may pass unseen unheard.

T. Come whispering through the ear, or a sudden shock on the skull.

C. A man may walk with a lamp at night, and yet be drowned in a ditch.

P. A man may climb the stair in the day, and slip on a broken step.

T. A man may sit at meat, and feel the cold in his groin.

Chorus. We have not been happy, my Lord, we have not been too happy.

We are not ignorant women, we know what we must expect and not expect.

We know of oppression and torture,

We know of extortion and violence,

Destitution, disease,

The old without fire in winter,

The child without milk in summer,

Our labour taken away from us,

Our sins made heavier upon us.

We have seen the young man mutilated,

The torn girl trembling by the mill-stream.

And meanwhile we have gone on living,

Living and partly living,

Picking together the pieces,

Gathering faggots at nightfall,

Building a partial shelter,

For sleeping, and eating and drinking and laughter.

God gave us always some reason, some hope; but now a new terror has soiled us, which none can avert, none can avoid, flowing under our feet and over the sky;

Under doors and down chimneys, flowing in at the ear and the mouth and the eye.

God is leaving us, God is leaving us, more pang, more pain, than birth or death.

Sweet and cloying through the dark air

Falls the stifling scent of despair;

The forms take shape in the dark air:

Puss-purr of leopard, footfall of padding bear,

Palm-pat of nodding ape, square hyaena waiting

For laughter, laughter, laughter. The Lords of Hell are here.

They curl round you, lie at your feet, swing and wing through the dark air.

O Thomas Archbishop, save us, save us, save yourself that we may be saved;

Destroy yourself and we are destroyed.

Thomas. Now is my way clear, now is the meaning plain:

Temptation shall not come in this kind again.

The last temptation is the greatest treason:

To do the right deed for the wrong reason.

The natural vigour in the venial sin

Is the way in which our lives begin.

Thirty years ago, I searched all the ways

That lead to pleasure, advancement and praise.

Delight in sense, in learning and in thought,

Music and philosophy, curiosity,

The purple bullfinch in the lilac tree,

The tiltyard skill, the strategy of chess,

Love in the garden, singing to the instrument,

Were all things equally desirable.

Ambition comes when early force is spent

And when we find no longer all things possible.

Ambition comes behind and unobservable.

Sin grows with doing good. When I imposed the King's law

In England, and waged war with him against Toulouse,

I beat the barons at their own game. I

Could then despise the men who thought me most contemptible,

The raw nobility, whose manners matched their fingernails.

While I ate out of the King's dish

To become servant of God was never my wish.

Servant of God has chance of greater sin

And sorrow, than the man who serves a king.

For those who serve the greater cause may make the cause serve them,

Still doing right: and striving with political men

May make that cause political, not by what they do

But by what they are. I know

What yet remains to show you of my history

Will seem to most of you at best futility,
Senseless self-slaughter of a lunatic,
Arrogant passion of a fanatic.
I know that history at all times draws
The strangest consequence from remotest
cause.

But for every evil, every sacrilege,
Crime, wrong, oppression and the axe's edge,

Indifference, exploitation, you, and you,
And you, must all be punished. So must
you.

I shall no longer act or suffer, to the sword's
end.

Now my good Angel, whom God appoints
To be my guardian, hover over the swords'
points.

INTERLUDE

THE ARCHBISHOP *preaches in the Cathedral on Christmas Morning, 1170*

'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.' *The fourteenth verse of the second chapter of the Gospel according to Saint Luke.* In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Dear children of God, my sermon this morning will be a very short one. I wish only that you should ponder and meditate the deep meaning and mystery of our masses of Christmas Day. For whenever Mass is said, we re-enact the Passion and Death of Our Lord; and on this Christmas Day we do this in celebration of His Birth. So that at the same moment we rejoice in His coming for the salvation of men, and offer again to God His Body and Blood in sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. It was in this same night that has just passed, that a multitude of the heavenly host appeared before the shepherds at Bethlehem, saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men'; at this same time of all the year that we celebrate at once the Birth of Our Lord and His Passion and Death upon the Cross. Beloved, as the World sees, this is to behave in a strange fashion. For who in the World will both mourn and rejoice at once and for the same reason? For either joy will be overborne by mourning, or mourning will be cast out by joy; so it is only in these our Christian mysteries that we can rejoice and mourn at once for the same reason. But think for a while on the meaning of this word 'peace.' Does it seem strange to you that the angels should have announced Peace, when ceaselessly the world has been stricken with War and the fear of War? Does it seem to you that the angelic voices were mistaken, and that the promise was a disappointment and a cheat?

Reflect now, how Our Lord Himself spoke of Peace. He said to His disciples 'My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.' Did He mean peace as we think of it: the kingdom of England at peace with its neighbours, the barons at peace with the King, the householder counting over his peaceful gains, the swept hearth, his best wine for a friend at the table, his wife singing to the children? Those men His disciples knew no such things: they went forth to journey afar, to suffer by land and sea, to know torture, imprisonment, disappointment, to suffer death by martyrdom. What then did He mean? If you ask that, remember then that He said also, 'Not as the world gives, give I unto you.' So then, He gave to His disciples peace, but not peace as the world gives.

Consider also one thing of which you have probably never thought. Not only do we at the feast of Christmas celebrate at once Our Lord's Birth and His Death: but on the next day we celebrate the martyrdom of His first martyr, the blessed Stephen. Is it an accident, do you think, that the day of the first martyr follows immediately the day of the Birth of Christ? By no means. Just as we rejoice and mourn at once, in the Birth and in the Passion of Our Lord; so also, in a smaller figure, we both rejoice and mourn in the death of martyrs. We mourn, for the sins of the world that has martyred them; we rejoice, that another soul is numbered among the Saints in Heaven, for the glory of God and for the salvation of men.

Beloved, we do not think of a martyr simply as a good Christian who has been killed because he is a Christian: for that would be solely to mourn. We do not think of him simply as a good Christian who has been elevated to the company of the Saints: for that would be simply to rejoice: and neither our mourning nor our rejoicing is as the world's is. A Christian martyrdom is no

accident. Saints are not made by accident. Still less is a Christian martyrdom the effect of a man's will to become a Saint, as a man by willing and contriving may become a ruler of men. Ambition fortifies the will of man to become ruler over other men: it operates with deception, cajolery, and violence, it is the action of impurity upon impurity. Not so in Heaven. A martyr, a saint, is always made by the design of God, for His love of men, to warn them and to lead them, to bring them back to His ways. A martyrdom is never the design of man; for the true martyr is he who has become the instrument of God, who has lost his will in the will of God, not lost it but found it, for he has found freedom in submission to God. The martyr no longer desires anything for himself, not even the glory of martyrdom. So thus as on earth the Church mourns and rejoices at once, in a fashion that the world cannot understand; so in Heaven the Saints are most high, having made themselves most low, seeing themselves not as we see them, but in the light of the Godhead from which they draw their being.

I have spoken to you today, dear children of God, of the martyrs of the past, asking you to remember especially our martyr of Canterbury, the blessed Archbishop Elphege; because it is fitting, on Christ's birth day, to remember what is that Peace which He brought; and because, dear children, I do not think I shall ever preach to you again; and because it is possible that in a short time you may have yet another martyr, and that one perhaps not the last. I would have you keep in your hearts these words that I say, and think of them at another time. In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

PART II CHARACTERS

THREE PRIESTS

FOUR KNIGHTS

ARCHBISHOP THOMAS BECKET

CHORUS OF WOMEN OF CANTERBURY

ATTENDANTS

*The first scene is in the Archbishop's Hall,
the second scene is in the Cathedral, on December 29th, 1170*

Chorus. Does the bird sing in the South?

Only the sea-bird cries, driven inland by the storm.

What sign of the spring of the year?

Only the death of the old: not a stir, not a shoot, not a breath.

Do the days begin to lengthen?

Longer and darker the day, shorter and colder the night.

Still and stifling the air: but a wind is stored up in the East.

The starved crow sits in the field, attentive; and in the wood

The owl rehearses the hollow note of death.

What signs of a bitter spring?

The wind stored up in the East.

What, at the time of the birth of Our Lord, at Christmastide,

Is there not peace upon earth, goodwill among men?

The peace of this world is always uncertain, unless men keep the peace of God.

And war among men defiles this world, but death in the Lord renews it,

And the world must be cleaned in the winter, or we shall have only

A sour spring, a parched summer, an empty harvest.

Between Christmas and Easter what work shall be done?

The ploughman shall go out in March and turn the same earth

He has turned before, the bird shall sing the same song.

When the leaf is out on the tree, when the elder and may

Burst over the stream, and the air is clear and high,

And voices trill at windows, and children tumble in front of the door,

What work shall have been done, what wrong

Shall the bird's song cover, the green tree cover, what wrong

Shall the fresh earth cover? We wait, and the time is short

But waiting is long.

[Enter the FOUR KNIGHTS]

First Knight. Servants of the King.

First Priest. And known to us.

You are welcome. Have you ridden far?

First Knight. Not far today, but matters urgent

Have brought us from France. We rode hard,

Took ship yesterday, landed last night,

Having business with the Archbishop.

Second Knight. Urgent business.

Third Knight. From the King.

Fourth Knight. By the King's order.

First Knight. Our men are outside.

First Priest. You know the Archbishop's hospitality.

We are about to go to dinner.

The good Archbishop would be vexed

If we did not offer you entertainment

Before your business. Please dine with us.

Your men shall be looked after also.

Dinner before business. Do you like roast pork?

First Knight. Business before dinner.

We will roast your pork

First, and dine upon it after.

Second Knight. We must see the Archbishop.

Third Knight. Go, tell the Archbishop
We have no need of his hospitality.

We will find our own dinner.

First Priest [to attendant]. Go, tell His Lordship.

Fourth Knight. How much longer will you keep us waiting?

[Enter THOMAS]

Thomas [to PRIESTS]. However certain our expectation

The moment foreseen may be unexpected

When it arrives. It comes when we are

Engrossed with matters of other urgency.

On my table you will find

The papers in order, and the documents signed.

[To KNIGHTS]

You are welcome, whatever your business may be.

You say, from the King?

First Knight. Most surely from the King.

We must speak with you alone.

Thomas [to PRIESTS]. Leave us then alone.

Now what is the matter?

First Knight. This is the matter.

The Four Knights. You are the Archbishop in revolt against the King; in rebellion to the King and the law of the land;

You are the Archbishop who was made by the King; whom he set in your place to carry out his command.

You are his servant, his tool, and his jack,

You wore his favours on your back,

You had your honours all from his hand; from him you had the power, the seal and the ring.

This is the man who was the tradesman's son: the backstairs brat who was born in Cheapside;

This is the creature that crawled upon the King; swollen with blood and swollen with pride.

Creeping out of the London dirt,

Crawling up like a louse on your shirt,

The man who cheated, swindled, lied; broke his oath and betrayed his King.

Thomas. This is not true.

Both before and after I received the ring

I have been a loyal vassal to the King.

Saving my order, I am at his command,

As his most faithful vassal in the land.

First Knight. Saving your order! let your order save you—

As I do not think it is like to do.

Saving your ambition is what you mean,

Saving your pride, envy and spleen.

Second Knight. Saving your insolence and greed.

Won't you ask us to pray to God for you, in your need?

Third Knight. Yes, we'll pray for you!

Fourth Knight. Yes, we'll pray for you!

The Four Knights. Yes, we'll pray that God may help you!

Thomas. But, gentlemen, your business

Which you said so urgent, is it only

Scolding and blaspheming?

First Knight. That was only

Our indignation, as loyal subjects.

Thomas. Loyal? to whom?

First Knight. To the King!

Second Knight. The King!

Third Knight. The King!

Fourth Knight. God bless him!

Thomas. Then let your new coat of loyalty be worn

Carefully, so it get not soiled or torn.

Have you something to say?

First Knight. By the King's command.

Shall we say it now?

Second Knight. Without delay,

Before the old fox is off and away.

Thomas. What you have to say

By the King's command—if it be the King's command—

Should be said in public. If you make charges,

Then in public I will refute them.

First Knight. No! here and now!

[They make to attack him, but the priests and attendants return and quietly interpose themselves]

Thomas. Now and here!

First Knight. Of your earlier misdeeds
I shall make no mention.

They are too well known. But after dissension

Had ended, in France, and you were ended

With your former privilege, how did you
show your gratitude?

You had fled from England, not exiled
Or threatened, mind you; but in the hope
Of stirring up trouble in the French dominions.

You sowed strife abroad, you reviled
The King to the King of France, to the
Pope,

Raising up against him false opinions.

Second Knight. Yet the King, out of his
charity,

And urged by your friends, offered clemency,
Made a pact of peace, and all dispute ended
Sent you back to your See as you demanded.

Third Knight. And burying the memory
of your transgressions
Restored your honours and your possessions.
All was granted for which you sued:
Yet how, I repeat, did you show your gratitude?

Fourth Knight. Suspending those who
had crowned the young prince,
Denying the legality of his coronation;
Binding with the chains of anathema,
Using every means in your power to evince
The King's faithful servants, everyone who
transacts
His business in his absence, the business of
the nation.

First Knight. These are the facts.
Say therefore if you will be content
To answer in the King's presence. Therefore
were we sent.

Thomas. Never was it my wish
To uncrown the King's son, or to diminish
His honour and power. Why should he wish
To deprive my people of me and keep me
from my own
And bid me sit in Canterbury, alone?
I would wish him three crowns rather than
one,
And as for the bishops, it is not my yoke
That is laid upon them, or mine to revoke.
Let them go to the Pope. It was he who
condemned them.

First Knight. Through you they were
suspended.

Second Knight. By you be this amended.

Third Knight. Absolve them.

Fourth Knight. Absolve them.

Thomas. I do not deny

That this was done through me. But it is
not I

Who can loose whom the Pope has bound.
Let them go to him, upon whom redounds
Their contempt towards me, their contempt
towards the Church shown.

First Knight. Be that as it may, here is
the King's command:

That you and your servants depart from this
land.

Thomas. If that is the King's command,
I will be bold

To say: seven years were my people without

My presence; seven years of misery and
pain.

Seven years a mendicant on foreign charity
I lingered abroad: seven years is no brevity.
I shall not get those seven years back again.
Never again, you must make no doubt,
Shall the sea run between the shepherd and
his fold.

First Knight. The King's justice, the
King's majesty,

You insult with gross indignity;
Insolent madman, whom nothing deters
From attainting his servants and ministers.

Thomas. It is not I who insult the King,
And there is higher than I or the King.
It is not I, Becket from Cheapside,
It is not against me, Becket, that you strive.
It is not Becket who pronounces doom,
But the Law of Christ's Church, the judgement
of Rome.

Go then to Rome, or let Rome come
Here, to you, in the person of her most unworthy son.

Petty politicians in your endless adventure!
Rome alone can absolve those who break
Christ's indenture.

First Knight. Priest, you have spoken
in peril of your life.

Second Knight. Priest, you have spoken
in danger of the knife.

Third Knight. Priest, you have spoken
treachery and treason.

Fourth Knight. Priest! traitor confirmed
in malfeasance.

Thomas. I submit my cause to the judgement
of Rome.

But if you kill me, I shall rise from my
tomb

To submit my cause before God's throne.

Knights. Priest! monk! and servant!
· take, hold, detain,

Restrain this man, in the King's name;
Or answer with your bodies, if he escape before we come,

We come for the King's justice, we come again.

[*Exeunt*]

Thomas. Pursue those who flee, track down those who evade;

Come for arrest, come with the sword,
Here, here, you shall find me ready, in the battle of the Lord.

At whatsoever time you are ready to come,
You will find me still more ready for martyrdom.

Chorus. I have smelt them, the death-bringers, senses are quickened

By subtle forebodings; I have heard
Fluting in the nighttime, fluting and owls,
have seen at noon

Scaly wings slanting over, huge and ridiculous. I have tasted

The savour of putrid flesh in the spoon. I have felt

The heaving of earth at nightfall, restless, absurd. I have heard

Laughter in the noises of beasts that make strange noises: jackal, jackass, jackdaw; the scurrying noise of mouse and jerboa; the laugh of the loon, the lunatic bird. I have seen

Grey necks twisting, rat tails twining, in the thick light of dawn. I have eaten

Smooth creatures still living, with the strong salt taste of living things under sea; I have tasted

The living lobster, the crab, the oyster, the whelk and the prawn; and they live and spawn in my bowels, and my bowels dissolve in the light of dawn. I have smelt

Death in the rose, death in the hollyhock, sweet pea, hyacinth, primrose and cowslip. I have seen

Trunk and horn, tusk and hoof, in odd places;

I have lain on the floor of the sea and breathed with the breathing of the sea-anemone, swallowed with ingurgitation of the sponge. I have lain in the soil and criticised the worm. In the air

Flirted with the passage of the kite, I have plunged with the kite and cowered with the wren. I have felt

The horn of the beetle, the scale of the

viper, the mobile hard insensitive skin of the elephant, the evasive flank of the fish. I have smelt

Corruption in the dish, incense in the latrine, the sewer in the incense, the smell of sweet soap in the woodpath, a hellish sweet scent in the woodpath, while the ground heaved. I have seen

Rings of light coiling downwards, leading To the horror of the ape. Have I not known, not known

What was coming to be? It was here, in the kitchen, in the passage,

In the mews in the barn in the byre in the market place

In our veins our bowels our skulls as well

As well as in the plottings of potentates

As well as in the consultations of powers.

What is woven on the loom of fate

What is woven in the councils of princes

Is woven also in our veins, our brains,

Is woven like a pattern of living worms

In the guts of the women of Canterbury.

I have smelt them, the death-bringers; now is too late

For action, too soon for contrition.

Nothing is possible but the shamed swoon

Of those consenting to the last humiliation.

I have consented, Lord Archbishop, have consented.

Am torn away, subdued, violated,

United to the spiritual flesh of nature,

Mastered by the animal powers of spirit,

Dominated by the lust of self-demolition,

By the final utter uttermost death of spirit,

By the final ecstasy of waste and shame,

O Lord Archbishop, O Thomas Archbishop,

forgive us, forgive us, pray for us that

we may pray for you, out of our shame.

Thomas. Peace, and be at peace with your thoughts and visions.

These things had to come to you and you to accept them.

This is your share of the eternal burden,

The perpetual glory. This is one moment,

But know that another

Shall pierce you with a sudden painful joy

When the figure of God's purpose is made complete.

You shall forget these things, toiling in the household,

You shall remember them, droning by the fire,

When age and forgetfulness sweeten memory

Only like a dream that has often been told
And often been changed in the telling.

They will seem unreal.

Human kind cannot bear very much reality.

Priests [severally]. My Lord, you must not stop here. To the minster. Through the cloister. No time to waste. They are coming back, armed. To the altar, to the altar. They are here already. To the sanctuary. They are breaking in. We can barricade the minster doors. You cannot stay here. Force him to come. Seize him.

Thomas. All my life they have been coming, these feet. All my life I have waited. Death will come only when I am worthy, And if I am worthy, there is no danger. I have therefore only to make perfect my will.

Priests. My Lord, they are coming. They will break through presently.

You will be killed. Come to the altar.

Thomas. Peace! be quiet! remember where you are, and what is happening; No life here is sought for but mine, And I am not in danger: only near to death.

Priests. Make haste, my Lord. Don't stop here talking. It is not right.

What shall become of us, my Lord, if you are killed; what shall become of us?

Thomas. That again is another theme To be developed and resolved in the pattern of time.

It is not for me to run from city to city;
To meet death gladly is only
The only way in which I can defend
The Law of God, the holy canons.

Priests. My Lord, to vespers! You must not be absent from vespers. You must not be absent from the divine office. To vespers. Into the cathedral!

Thomas. Go to vespers, remember me at your prayers.

They shall find the shepherd here; the flock shall be spared.

I have had a tremor of bliss, a wink of heaven, a whisper,

And I would no longer be denied; all things Proceed to a joyful consummation.

Priests. Seize him! force him! drag him!

Thomas. Keep your hands off!

Priests. To vespers! Take his feet! Up with him! Hurry.

[*They drag him off. While the CHORUS speak, the scene is changed to the cathedral*]

Chorus [*while a Dies Irae is sung in Latin by a choir in the distance*]. Numb the hand and dry the eyelid,

Still the horror, but more horror
Than when tearing in the belly.

Still the horror, but more horror
Than when twisting in the fingers,
Than when splitting in the skull.

More than footfall in the passage,
More than shadow in the doorway,
More than fury in the hall.

The agents of hell disappear, the human,
they shrink and dissolve
Into dust on the wind, forgotten, unmemorable; only is here
The white flat face of Death, God's silent servant,

And behind the face of Death the Judgement
And behind the Judgement the Void, more horrid than active shapes of hell;
Emptiness, absence, separation from God;
The horror of the effortless journey, to the empty land

Which is no land, only emptiness, absence, the Void,

Where those who were men can no longer turn the mind

To distraction, delusion, escape into dream, pretence,

Where the soul is no longer deceived, for there are no objects, no tones,

No colours, no forms to distract, to divert the soul

From seeing itself, foully united forever, nothing with nothing,

Not what we call death, but what beyond death is not death,

We fear, we fear. Who shall then plead for me,

Who intercede for me, in my most need?

Dead upon the tree, my Saviour,
Let not be in vain Thy labour;
Help me, Lord, in my last fear.

Dust I am, to dust am bending,
From the final doom impending
Help me, Lord, for death is near.

[*In the cathedral. THOMAS and PRIESTS.*]

Priests. Bar the door. Bar the door.

The door is barred.

We are safe. We are safe.

The enemy may rage outside, he will tire
In vain. They cannot break in.

They dare not break in.

They cannot break in. They have not the force. *

We are safe. We are safe.

Thomas. Unbar the doors! throw open the doors!

I will not have the house of prayer, the church of Christ,

The sanctuary, turned into a fortress.

The Church shall protect her own, in her own way, not

As oak and stone; stone and oak decay, Give no stay, but the Church shall endure.

The church shall be open, even to our enemies. Open the door!

Priest. My Lord! these are not men, these come not as men come, but

Like maddened beasts. They come not like men, who

Respect the sanctuary, who kneel to the Body of Christ.

But like beasts. You would bar the door Against the lion, the leopard, the wolf or the boar,

Why not more

Against beasts with the souls of damned men, against men

Who would damn themselves to beasts. My Lord! My Lord!

Thomas. Unbar the door!

You think me reckless, desperate and mad. You argue by results, as this world does, To settle if an act be good or bad.

You defer to the fact. For every life and every act

Consequence of good and evil can be shown. And as in time results of many deeds are blended

So good and evil in the end become confounded.

It is not in time that my death shall be known;

It is out of time that my decision is taken If you call that decision

To which my whole being gives entire consent.

I give my life

To the Law of God above the Law of Man. Those who do not the same

How should they know what I do?

How should you know what I do? Yet how much more

Should you know than these madmen beating on the door.

Unbar the door! unbar the door!

We are not here to triumph by fighting, by stratagem, or by resistance,

Not to fight with beasts as men. We have fought the beast

And have conquered. We have only to conquer

Now, by suffering. This is the easier victory.

Now is the triumph of the Cross, now

Open the door! I command it. OPEN THE door!

[*The door is opened. The KNIGHTS enter, slightly tipsy*]

Priests. This way, my Lord! Quick. Up the stair. To the roof. To the crypt. Quick. Come. Force him.

Knights [one line each]. Where is Becket, the traitor to the King?

Where is Becket, the meddling priest?

Come down Daniel to the lions' den,

Come down Daniel for the mark of the beast.

Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

Are you marked with the mark of the beast?

Come down Daniel to the lions' den,

Come down Daniel and join in the feast.

Where is Becket the Cheapside brat?

Where is Becket the faithless priest?

Come down Daniel to the lions' den,

Come down Daniel and join in the feast.

Thomas. It is the just man who

Like a bold lion, should be without fear.

I am here.

No traitor to the King, I am a priest, A Christian, saved by the blood of Christ, Ready to suffer with my blood.

This is the sign of the Church always,

The sign of blood. Blood for blood.

His blood given to buy my life,

My blood given to pay for His death,

My death for His death.

Knights. Absolve all those you have excommunicated.

Resign the powers you have arrogated.

Restore to the King the money you appropriated.

Renew the obedience you have violated.

Thomas. For my Lord I am now ready to die,

That His Church may have peace and liberty.

Do with me as you will, to your hurt and shame;

But none of my people, in God's name,

Whether layman or clerk, shall you touch.

This I forbid.

Knights. Traitor! traitor! traitor! traitor!

Thomas. You, Reginald, three times traitor you:

Traitor to me as my temporal vassal,

Traitor to me as your spiritual lord,

Traitor to God in desecrating His Church.

First Knight. No faith do I owe to a renegade,

And what I owe shall now be paid.

Thomas. Now to Almighty God, to the Blessed Mary ever Virgin, to the blessed John the Baptist, the holy apostles Peter and Paul, to the blessed martyr Denys, and to all the Saints, I commend my cause and that of the Church.

[*While the KNIGHTS kill him, we hear the CHORUS*]

Chorus. Clear the air! clean the sky! wash the wind! take stone from stone and wash them.

The land is foul, the water is foul, our beasts and ourselves defiled with blood.

A rain of blood has blinded my eyes. Where is England? where is Kent? where is Canterbury?

O far far far far in the past; and I wander in a land of barren boughs: if I break them, they bleed; I wander in a land of dry stones: if I touch them they bleed.

How how can I ever return, to the soft quiet seasons?

Night stay with us, stop sun, hold season, let the day not come, let the spring not come.

Can I look again at the day and its common things, and see them all smeared with blood, through a curtain of falling blood?

We did not wish anything to happen.

We understood the private catastrophe,

The personal loss, the general misery,

Living and partly living;

The terror by night that ends in daily action,

The terror by day that ends in sleep;

But the talk in the market-place, the hand on the broom,

The nighttime heaping of the ashes,

The fuel laid on the fire at daybreak,

These acts marked a limit to our suffering.

Every horror had its definition,

Every sorrow had a kind of end:

In life there is not time to grieve long.

But this, this is out of life, this is out of time,

An instant eternity of evil and wrong.

We are soiled by a filth that we cannot clean, united to supernatural vermin,

It is not we alone, it is not the house, it is not the city that is defiled,

But the world that is wholly foul.

Clear the air! clean the sky! wash the wind!

take the stone from the stone, take the skin from the arm, take the muscle from the bone, and wash them. Wash the

stone, wash the bone, wash the brain, wash the soul, wash them wash them!

[*The KNIGHTS, having completed the murder, advance to the front of the stage and address the audience*]

First Knight. We beg you to give us your attention for a few moments. We know that you may be disposed to judge unfavourably of our action. You are Englishmen, and therefore you believe in fair play: and when you see one man being set upon by four, then your sympathies are all with the under dog. I respect such feelings, I share them. Nevertheless, I appeal to your sense of honour. You are Englishmen, and therefore will not judge anybody without hearing both sides of the case. That is in accordance with our long established principle of Trial by Jury. I am not myself qualified to put our case to you. I am a man of action and not of words. For that reason I shall do no more than introduce the other speakers, who, with their various abilities, and different points of view, will be able to lay before you the merits of this extremely complex problem. I shall call upon our youngest member to speak first. William de Traci.

Second Knight. I am afraid I am not anything like such an experienced speaker as Reginald Fitz Urse would lead you to believe. But there is one thing I should like to say, and I might as well say it at once. It is this: in what we have done, and whatever you may think of it, we have been perfectly disinterested. [*The other KNIGHTS: 'Hear! hear!'*] We are not getting anything out of this. We have much more to lose than to gain. We are four plain Englishmen who put our country first. I dare say that we didn't make a very good impression when we came in. The fact is that we knew we had taken on a pretty stiff job; I'll only speak for myself, but I had drunk a good deal—I am not a drinking man ordinarily—to brace myself up for it.

When you come to the point, it does go against the grain to kill an Archbishop, especially when you have been brought up in good Church traditions. So if we seemed a bit rowdy, you will understand why it was; and for my part I am awfully sorry about it. We realised that this was our duty, but all the same we had to work ourselves up to it. And, as I said, *we* are not getting a penny out of this. We know perfectly well how things will turn out. King Henry—God bless him—will have to say, for reasons of state, that he never meant this to happen; and there is going to be an awful row; and at the best we shall have to spend the rest of our lives abroad. And even when reasonable people come to see that the Archbishop *had* to be put out of the way—and personally I had a tremendous admiration for him—you must have noticed what a good show he put up at the end—they won't give *us* any glory. No, we have done for ourselves, there's no mistake about that. So, as I said at the beginning, please give us at least the credit for being completely disinterested in this business. I think that is about all I have to say.

First Knight. I think we will all agree that William de Traci has spoken well and has made a very important point. The gist of his argument is this: that we have been completely disinterested. But our act itself needs more justification than that; and you must hear our other speakers. I shall next call upon Hugh de Morville.

Third Knight. I should like first to recur to a point that was very well put by our leader, Reginald Fitz Urse: that you are Englishmen, and therefore your sympathies are always with the under dog. It is the English spirit of fair play. Now the worthy Archbishop, whose good qualities I very much admired, has throughout been presented as the under dog. But is this really the case? I am going to appeal not to your emotions but to your reason. You are hard-headed sensible people, as I can see, and not to be taken in by emotional clap-trap. I therefore ask you to consider soberly: what were the Archbishop's aims? and what are King Henry's aims? In the answer to these questions lies the key to the problem.

The King's aim has been perfectly consistent. During the reign of the late Queen Matilda and the irruption of the unhappy usurper Stephen, the kingdom was very

much divided. Our King saw that the one thing needful was to restore order: to curb the excessive powers of local government, which were usually exercised for selfish and often for seditious ends, and to systematise the judiciary. There was utter chaos: there were three kinds of justice and three kinds of court: that of the King, that of the Bishops, and that of the baronage. I must repeat one point that the last speaker has made. While the late Archbishop was Chancellor, he wholeheartedly supported the King's designs: this is an important point, which, if necessary, I can substantiate. Now the King intended that Becket, who had proved himself an extremely able administrator—no one denies that—should unite the offices of Chancellor and Archbishop. No one would have grudged him that; no one than he was better qualified to fill at once these two most important posts. Had Becket concurred with the King's wishes, we should have had an almost ideal State: a union of spiritual and temporal administration, under the central government. I knew Becket well, in various official relations; and I may say that I have never known a man so well qualified for the highest rank of the Civil Service. And what happened? The moment that Becket, at the King's instance, had been made Archbishop, he resigned the office of Chancellor, he became more priestly than the priests, he ostentatiously and offensively adopted an ascetic manner of life, he openly abandoned every policy that he had heretofore supported; he affirmed immediately that there was a higher order than that which our King, and he as the King's servant, had for so many years striven to establish; and that—God knows why—the two orders were incompatible.

You will agree with me that such interference by an Archbishop offends the instincts of a people like ours. So far, I know that I have your approval: I read it in your faces. It is only with the measures we have had to adopt, in order to set matters to rights, that you take issue. No one regrets the necessity for violence more than we do. Unhappily, there are times when violence is the only way in which social justice can be secured. At another time, you would condemn an Archbishop by vote of Parliament and execute him formally as a traitor, and no one would have to bear the

burden of being called murderer. And at a later time still, even such temperate measures as these would become unnecessary. But, if you have now arrived at a just subordination of the pretensions of the Church to the welfare of the State, remember that it is we who took the first step. We have been instrumental in bringing about the state of affairs that you approve. We have served your interests; we merit your applause; and if there is any guilt whatever in the matter, you must share it with us.

First Knight. Morville has given us a great deal to think about. It seems to me that he has said almost the last word, for those who have been able to follow his very subtle reasoning. We have, however, one more speaker, who has I think another point of view to express. If there are any who are still unconvinced, I think that Richard Brito will be able to convince them. Richard Brito.

Fourth Knight. The speakers who have preceded me, to say nothing of our leader, Reginald Fitz Urse, have all spoken very much to the point. I have nothing to add along their particular lines of argument. What I have to say may be put in the form of a question: *Who killed the Archbishop?* As you have been eye-witnesses of this lamentable scene, you may feel some surprise at my putting it in this way. But consider the course of events. I am obliged, very briefly, to go over the ground traversed by the last speaker. While the late Archbishop was Chancellor, no one, under the King, did more to weld the country together, to give it the unity, the stability, order, tranquillity, and justice that it so badly needed. From the moment he became Archbishop, he completely reversed his policy; he showed himself to be utterly indifferent to the fate of the country, to be, in fact, a monster of egotism, a menace to society. This egotism grew upon him, until it became at last an undoubted mania. Every means that had been tried to conciliate him, to restore him to reason, had failed. Now I have unimpeachable evidence to the effect that before he left France he clearly prophesied, in the presence of numerous witnesses, that he had not long to live, and that he would be killed in England. He used every means of provocation; from his conduct, step by step, there can be no inference except that he had determined upon

a death by martyrdom. This man, formerly a great public servant, had become a wrecker. Even at the last, he could have given us reason: you have seen how he evaded our questions. And when he had deliberately exasperated us beyond human endurance, he could still have easily escaped; he could have kept himself from us long enough to allow our righteous anger to cool. That was just what he did not wish to happen; he insisted, while we were still inflamed with wrath, that the doors should be opened. Need I say more? I think, with these facts before you, you will unhesitatingly render a verdict of Suicide while of Unsound Mind. It is the only charitable verdict you can give, upon one who was, after all, a great man.

First Knight. Thank you, Brito. I think that there is no more to be said; and I suggest that you now disperse quietly to your homes. Please be careful not to loiter in groups at street corners, and do nothing that might provoke any public outbreak.

[*Exeunt KNIGHTS*]

First Priest. O father, father, gone from us, lost to us,

How shall we find you, from what far place
Do you look down on us? You now in Heaven,

Who shall now guide us, protect us, direct us?

After what journey through what further dread

Shall we recover your presence? when inherit

Your strength? The Church lies bereft,
Alone, desecrated, desolated, and the heathen shall build on the ruins,

Their world without God. I see it. I see it.

Third Priest. No. For the Church is stronger for this action,

Triumphant in adversity. It is fortified
By persecution: supreme, so long as men will die for it.

Go, weak sad men, lost erring souls, homeless in earth or heaven.

Go where the sunset reddens the last grey rock

Of Brittany, or the Gates of Hercules.

Go venture shipwreck on the sullen coasts
Where blackamoors make captive Christian men;

Go to the northern seas confined with ice
Where the dead breath makes numb the hand, makes dull the brain;

Find an oasis in the desert sun,
Go seek alliance with the heathen Saracen,
To share his filthy rites, and try to snatch
Forgetfulness in his libidinous courts,
Oblivion in the fountain by the date-tree;
Or sit and bite your nails in Aquitaine.
In the small circle of pain within the skull
You still shall tramp and tread one endless
round

Of thought, to justify your action to your-
selves,

Weaving a fiction which unravels as you
weave,

Pacing forever in the hell of make-believe
Which never is belief: this is your fate on
earth

And we must think no further of you. O
my lord

The glory of whose new state is hidden
from us,

Pray for us of your charity; now in the
sight of God

Conjoined with all the saints and martyrs
gone before you,

Remember us. Let our thanks ascend

To God, who has given us another Saint in
Canterbury.

*Chorus [while a Te Deum is sung in Latin
by a choir in the distance].* We praise
Thee, O God, for Thy glory displayed
in all the creatures of the earth,

In the snow, in the rain, in the wind, in the
storm; in all of Thy creatures, both the
hunters and the hunted.

For all things exist only as seen by Thee,
only as known by Thee, all things exist

Only in Thy light, and Thy glory is declared
even in that which denies Thee; the
darkness declares the glory of light.

Those who deny Thee could not deny, if
Thou didst not exist; and their denial
is never complete, for if it were so, they
would not exist.

They affirm Thee in living; all things affirm
Thee in living; the bird in the air,
both the hawk and the finch; the beast
on the earth, both the wolf and the
lamb; the worm in the soil and the
worm in the belly.

Therefore man, whom Thou hast made to
be conscious of Thee, must consciously
praise Thee, in thought and in word
and in deed.

Even with the hand to the broom, the back
bent in laying the fire, the knee bent in

cleaning the hearth, we, the scrubbers
and sweepers of Canterbury,

The back bent under toil, the knee bent
under sin, the hands to the face under
fear, the head bent under grief,

Even in us the voices of seasons, the snuffle
of winter, the song of spring, the drone
of summer, the voices of beasts and of
birds, praise Thee.

We thank Thee for Thy mercies of blood,
for Thy redemption by blood. For the
blood of Thy martyrs and saints

Shall enrich the earth, shall create the holy
places.

For wherever a saint has dwelt, wherever a
martyr has given his blood for the blood
of Christ,

There is holy ground, and the sanctity shall
not depart from it

Though armies trample over it, though
sightseers come with guide-books look-
ing over it;

From where the western seas gnaw at the
coast of Iona,

To the death in the desert, the prayer in
forgotten places by the broken imperial
column,

From such ground springs that which for-
ever renews the earth

Though it is forever denied. Therefore, O
God, we thank Thee

Who hast given such blessing to Canterbury.

Forgive us, O Lord, we acknowledge our-
selves as type of the common man,

Of the men and women who shut the door
and sit by the fire;

Who fear the blessing of God, the loneliness
of the night of God, the surrender re-
quired, the deprivation inflicted;

Who fear the injustice of men less than the
justice of God;

Who fear the hand at the window, the fire
in the thatch, the fist in the tavern, the
push into the canal,

Less than we fear the love of God.

We acknowledge our trespass, our weakness,
our fault; we acknowledge

That the sin of the world is upon our heads;
that the blood of the martyrs and the
agony of the saints

Is upon our heads.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

Christ, have mercy upon us.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

Blessed Thomas, pray for us.

A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE
By TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

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TENNESSEE WILLIAMS AND HIS PLAYS

THOMAS LANIER (TENNESSEE) WILLIAMS, poet, playwright, and novelist, was born in Columbus, Mississippi, in 1914; after some years his family moved north to a St. Louis tenement. These two locales may stand as the symbolic limits of his early experience which equally formed the boundaries of his writing. The years after his collegiate study at the universities of Missouri, Iowa, and Washington were spent roving the country, working as bellhop, elevator man, usher, teletyper, warehouseman, waiter, and reciter of verses in a Greenwich Village nightclub. During these years he was also writing the first of some twenty one-act plays which established his reputation among little theater groups.

In 1940 his first professionally produced full length play, *Battle of Angels*, was staged in Boston by the Theatre Guild. The opening night resulted in the kind of audience reaction most often associated with the Abbey Theatre, Dublin. Williams himself has declared that he never saw an audience so infuriated, and blamed his subject matter, which mixed sex with religion. Since this mixture has been the source of unflinching success from at least Shakespeare to Cecil B. De Mille, other observers blamed an overrealistic climactic fire which filled the auditorium with smoke, and an insubordinate leading lady. Whatever the cause, the play remained a failure, never reaching Broadway. The talent of the dramatist, however, was recognized, and he received several grants-in-aid from the Rockefeller Foundation and the Institute of Arts and Letters which enabled him to continue his writing.

In the spring of 1945, Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* was produced in Chicago and later brought to New York where it achieved a run of over 500 performances and won the Drama Critic's Circle Award as the best play of the year almost immediately after its opening. The play is free-moving and occasionally diffuse, but encloses within its generally loose almost narrative structure (it is told in a series of "flashbacks") a number of taut, economically composed dramatic scenes. Williams was here writing from his own experience the story of a southern family transplanted to a northern community, unable or unwilling to shake off the past. The menagerie of the title also is autobiographical for Williams had in mind a collection of glass animals belonging to his sister which came to represent for him, after his family had moved to St. Louis, "all the softest emotions that belong to the recollection of things past." In concept and execution, in situation and symbolism, *The Glass Menagerie* belongs to the naturalistic tradition as developed by Tchekhov.

In the fall of 1945, Williams joined with Donald Windham in dramatizing a short story by D. H. Lawrence, *You Touched Me*. Although the play was not a success, it revealed another of the writer's interests. The commonplace plot, in which a girl is rescued by a resourceful young man from the spinsterhood to which her domineering mother would condemn her, is given distinction by an allegorical level of meaning. Like a good many modern "allegories," a precise statement of this level is difficult to make, and perhaps unnecessary, since the play will not figure prominently in a discussion of the modern drama. It does simply complete the tributary elements which make up Williams' particular art: in subject matter, the irreconcilable conflict of old and new; and in technique, the short, naturalistic scene, symbolism, allegory.

A Streetcar Named Desire (1947) represents the most successful proportionate blending of these elements, though they are all present in the less successful *Summer and Smoke* (1948) and to some extent in his comedy, *The Rose Tattoo* (1950). In structure, *A Streetcar* represents the master craftsman of the one-act play in a series of eleven scenes (in production, intermissions are indicated after scenes Four and Six). Each scene is distinguished by economical strokes of characterization, a quickly established conflict and its swift development to a crisis, at which point the curtain falls. The subject of the play is one that has almost become a trademark with Mr. Williams: the confrontation of the old romantic code of the ante-bellum South and the code of a vigorous, realistic, urbanized "new world." It is, indeed, the subject of *The Cherry Orchard*, but it is a mark of the times that more than the symbol of the old way of life is destroyed in the catastrophe of the American play.

In spite of its violence, however, the play escapes the pitfalls of melodrama through the playwright's controlled use of symbolism. Every object, every character, every action in the play functions both in the immediate development of the action and in the development of the larger theme. This theme, the conflict between illusion and reality, has been of par-

ticular concern to many contemporary authors and Williams handles it in *A Streetcar* with considerable tact. In his later plays, symbolism tends to get the upper hand, and pathetic situations become mawkish and comic situations farcical. But in *A Streetcar* the symbols are so functional in the action itself that they rarely intrude upon the spectator's consciousness and so do their work, as is proper, in silence.

A Streetcar Named Desire was first performed in New York City, December 3, 1947, under the direction of Elia Kazan, with Jessica Tandy as Blanche, Marlon Brando as Stanley, Kim Hunter as Stella, and Karl Malden as Mitch. After a long run, it was successfully filmed, with Vivian Leigh in the role of Blanche. Jean Cocteau later prepared a highly controversial French production, under the title, *Un Tramway Nommé Désir*.

CHARACTERS

BLANCHE
STELLA
STANLEY
MITCH
EUNICE
STEVE
PABLO
A NEGRO WOMAN
A DOCTOR
A NURSE
A YOUNG COLLECTOR
A MEXICAN WOMAN

A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE

SCENE ONE

The exterior of a two-story corner building on a street in New Orleans which is named Elysian Fields and runs between the L & N tracks and the river. The section is poor but, unlike corresponding sections in other American cities, it has a raffish charm. The houses are mostly white frame, weathered grey, with rickety outside stairs and galleries and quaintly ornamented gables. This building contains two flats, upstairs and down. Faded white stairs ascend to the entrances of both.

It is first dark of an evening early in May. The sky that shows around the dim white building is a peculiarly tender blue, almost a turquoise, which invests the scene with a kind of lyricism and gracefully attenuates the atmosphere of decay. You can almost feel the warm breath of the brown river beyond the river warehouses with their faint redolences of bananas and coffee. A corresponding air is evoked by the music of Negro entertainers at a barroom around the corner. In this part of New Orleans you are practically always just around the corner, or a few doors down the street, from a tinny piano being played with the infatuated fluency of brown fingers. This "Blue Piano" expresses the spirit of the life which goes on here.

Two women, one white and one colored, are taking the air on the steps of the building. The white woman is Eunice, who occupies the upstairs flat; the colored woman a neighbor, for New Orleans is a cosmopolitan city where there is a relatively warm and easy intermingling of races in the old part of town.

Above the music of the "Blue Piano" the voices of people on the street can be heard overlapping.

[Two men come around the corner, STANLEY KOWALSKI and MITCH. They are about twenty-eight or thirty years old, roughly dressed in blue denim work clothes. STANLEY carries his bowling jacket and a red-stained

package from a butcher's. They stop at the foot of the steps]

Stanley [bellowing]. Hey, there! Stella, Baby!

[STELLA comes out on the first floor landing, a gentle young woman, about twenty-five, and of a background obviously quite different from her husband's]

Stella [mildly]. Don't holler at me like that. Hi, Mitch.

Stanley. Catch!

Stella. What?

Stanley. Meat!

[He heaves the package at her. She cries out in protest but manages to catch it; then she laughs breathlessly. Her husband and his companion have already started back around the corner.]

Stella [calling after him]. Stanley! Where are you going?

Stanley. Bowling!

Stella. Can I come watch?

Stanley. Come on.

[He goes out]
Stella. Be over soon. [To the white woman] Hello, Eunice. How are you?

Eunice. I'm all right. Tell Steve to get him a poor boy's sandwich 'cause nothing's left here.

[They all laugh; the colored woman does not stop. STELLA goes out]

Colored Woman. What was that package he th'ew at 'er?

[She rises from steps, laughing louder]

Eunice. You hush, now!

Negro Woman. Catch what!

[She continues to laugh. BLANCHE comes around the corner, carrying a valise. She looks at a slip of paper, then at the building, then again at the slip and again at the building. Her expression is one of shocked disbelief. Her appearance is incongruous to this setting. She is daintily dressed in a white suit with a fluffy bodice, neck-lace and earrings of pearl, white gloves and hat, looking as if she were arriving at a summer tea or cocktail party

in the garden district. She is about five years older than STELLA. Her delicate beauty must avoid a strong light. There is something about her uncertain manner, as well as her white clothes, that suggests a moth]

Eunice [finally]. What's the matter, honey? Are you lost?

Blanche [with faintly hysterical humor]. They told me to take a streetcar named Desire, and then transfer to one called Cemeteries and ride six blocks and get off at—Elysian Fields!

Eunice. That's where you are now.

Blanche. At Elysian Fields?

Eunice. This here is Elysian Fields.

Blanche. They mustn't have—understood—what number I wanted.

Eunice. What number you lookin' for?

[*BLANCHE* wearily refers to the slip of paper]

Blanche. Six thirty-two.

Eunice. You don't have to look no further.

Blanche [uncomprehendingly]. I'm looking for my sister, Stella DuBois. I mean—Mrs. Stanley Kowalski.

Eunice. That's the party— You just did miss her, though.

Blanche. This—can this be—her home?

Eunice. She's got the downstairs here and I got the up.

Blanche. Oh. She's—out?

Eunice. You noticed that bowling alley around the corner?

Blanche. I'm—not sure I did.

Eunice. Well, that's where she's at, watchin' her husband bowl. [*There is a pause*] You want to leave your suitcase here an' go find her?

Blanche. No.

Negro Woman. I'll go tell her you come.

Blanche. Thanks.

Negro Woman. You welcome.

[*She goes out*]

Eunice. She wasn't expecting you?

Blanche. No. No, not tonight.

Eunice. Well, why don't you just go in and make yourself at home till they get back.

Blanche. How could I—do that?

Eunice. We own this place so I can let you in.

[*She gets up and opens the downstairs door. A light goes on behind the blind, turning it light blue. BLANCHE*

slowly follows her into the downstairs flat. The surrounding areas dim out as the interior is lighted]

[Two rooms can be seen, not too clearly defined. The one first entered is primarily a kitchen but contains a folding bed to be used by *BLANCHE*. The room beyond this is a bedroom. Off this room is a narrow door to a bathroom]

Eunice [defensively, noticing *BLANCHE*'s look]. It's sort of messed up right now but when it's clean it's real sweet.

Blanche. Is it?

Eunice. Uh-huh, I think so. So you're Stella's sister?

Blanche. Yes. [*Wanting to get rid of her*] Thanks for letting me in.

Eunice. Por nada, as the Mexicans say, por nada! Stella spoke of you.

Blanche. Yes?

Eunice. I think she said you taught school.

Blanche. Yes.

Eunice. And you're from Mississippi, huh?

Blanche. Yes.

Eunice. She showed me a picture of your home-place, the plantation.

Blanche. Belle Reve?

Eunice. A great big place with white columns.

Blanche. Yes . . .

Eunice. A place like that must be awful hard to keep up.

Blanche. If you will excuse me. I'm just about to drop.

Eunice. Sure, honey. Why don't you set down?

Blanche. What I meant was I'd like to be left alone.

Eunice. Aw. I'll make myself scarce, in that case.

Blanche. I didn't mean to be rude, but—

Eunice. I'll drop by the bowling alley an' hustle her up.

[*She goes out the door*]

[*BLANCHE* sits in a chair very stiffly with her shoulders slightly hunched and her legs pressed close together and her hands tightly clutching her purse as if she were quite cold. After a while the blind look goes out of her eyes and she begins to look slowly around. A cat screeches. She catches her breath with a startled gesture. Sud-

denly she notices something in a half opened closet. She springs up and crosses to it, and removes a whiskey bottle. She pours a half tumbler of whiskey and tosses it down. She carefully replaces the bottle and washes out the tumbler at the sink. Then she resumes her seat in front of the table]

Blanche [faintly to herself]. I've got to keep hold of myself!

[STELLA comes quickly around the corner of the building and runs to the door of the downstairs flat]

Stella [calling out joyfully]. Blanche!

[For a moment they stare at each other.

Then BLANCHE springs up and runs to her with a wild cry]

Blanche. Stella, oh, Stella, Stella! Stella for Star!

[She begins to speak with feverish vivacity as if she feared for either of them to stop and think. They catch each other in a spasmodic embrace]

Blanche. Now, then, let me look at you. But don't you look at me, Stella, no, no, no, not till later, not till I've bathed and rested! And turn that over-light off! Turn that off! I won't be looked at in this merciless glare! [STELLA laughs and complies] Come back here now! Oh, my baby! Stella! Stella for Star! [She embraces her again] I thought you would never come back to this horrible place! What am I saying? I didn't mean to say that. I meant to be nice about it and say—Oh, what a convenient location and such—Ha-a-ha! Precious lamb! You haven't said a word to me.

Stella. You haven't given me a chance to, honey!

[She laughs, but her glance at BLANCHE is a little anxious]

Blanche. Well, now you talk. Open your pretty mouth and talk while I look around for some liquor! I know you must have some liquor on the place! Where could it be, I wonder? Oh, I spy, I spy!

[She rushes to the closet and removes the bottle; she is shaking all over and panting for breath as she tries to laugh. The bottle nearly slips from her grasp]

Stella [noticing]. Blanche, you sit down and let me pour the drinks. I don't know what we've got to mix with. Maybe a

coke's in the icebox. Look'n see, honey, while I'm—

Blanche. No coke, honey, not with my nerves tonight! Where—where—where is—?

Stella. Stanley? Bowling! He loves it. They're having a—found some soda!—tournament . . .

Blanche. Just water, baby, to chase it! Now don't get worried, your sister hasn't turned into a drunkard, she's just all shaken up and hot and tired and dirty! You sit down, now, and explain this place to me! What are you doing in a place like this?

Stella. Now, Blanche—

Blanche. Oh, I'm not going to be hypocritical, I'm going to be honestly critical about it! Never, never, never in my worst dreams could I picture—Only Poe! Only Mr. Edgar Allan Poe!—could do it justice! Out there I suppose is the ghoulish woodland of Weir!

[She laughs]

Stella. No, honey, those are the L & N tracks.

Blanche. No, now seriously, putting joking aside. Why didn't you tell me, why didn't you write me, honey, why didn't you let me know?

Stella [carefully, pouring herself a drink]. Tell you what, Blanche?

Blanche. Why, that you had to live in these conditions!

Stella. Aren't you being a little intense about it? It's not that bad at all! New Orleans isn't like other cities.

Blanche. This has got nothing to do with New Orleans. You might as well say—forgive me, blessed baby! [She suddenly stops short] The subject is closed!

Stella [a little drily]. Thanks.

[During the pause, BLANCHE stares at her. She smiles at BLANCHE]

Blanche [looking down at her glass, which shakes in her hand]. You're all I've got in the world, and you're not glad to see me!

Stella [sincerely]. Why, Blanche, you know that's not true.

Blanche. No?—I'd forgotten how quiet you were.

Stella. You never did give me a chance to say much, Blanche. So I just got in the habit of being quiet around you.

Blanche [vaguely]. A good habit to get into . . . [Then, abruptly] You haven't asked me how I happened to get away from

the school before the spring term ended.

Stella. Well, I thought you'd volunteer that information—if you wanted to tell me.

Blanche. You thought I'd been fired?

Stella. No, I—thought you might have—resigned . . .

Blanche. I was so exhausted by all I'd been through my—nerves broke. [*Nervously tamping cigarette*] I was on the verge of—lunacy, almost! So Mr. Graves—Mr. Graves is the high school superintendent—he suggested I take a leave of absence. I couldn't put all of those details into the wire . . . [*She drinks quickly*] Oh, this buzzes right through me and feels so good!

Stella. Won't you have another?

Blanche. No, one's my limit.

Stella. Sure?

Blanche. You haven't said a word about my appearance.

Stella. You look just fine.

Blanche. God love you for a liar! Daylight never exposed so total a ruin! But you—you've put on some weight, yes, you're just as plump as a little partridge! And it's so becoming to you!

Stella. Now, Blanche—

Blanche. Yes, it is, it is or I wouldn't say it! You just have to watch around the hips a little. Stand up.

Stella. Not now.

Blanche. You hear me? I said stand up! [*STELLA complies reluctantly*] You messy child, you, you've spilt something on the pretty white lace collar! About your hair—you ought to have it cut in a feather bob with your dainty features. Stella, you have a maid, don't you?

Stella. No. With only two rooms it's—

Blanche. What? Two rooms, did you say?

Stella. This one and—

[*She is embarrassed*]

Blanche. The other one?

[*She laughs sharply. There is an embarrassed silence*]

Blanche. I am going to take just one little tiny nip more, sort of to put the stopper on, so to speak. . . . Then put the bottle away so I won't be tempted. [*She rises*] I want you to look at my figure! [*She turns around*] You know I haven't put on one ounce in ten years, Stella? I weigh what I weighed the summer you left Belle Reve. The summer Dad died and you left us . . .

Stella [*a little wearily*]. It's just incredible, Blanche, how well you're looking.

[*They both laugh uncomfortably*]

Blanche. But, Stella, there's only two rooms, I don't see where you're going to put me!

Stella. We're going to put you in here.

Blanche. What kind of bed's this—one of those collapsible things?

[*She sits on it*]

Stella. Does it feel all right?

Blanche [*dubiously*]. Wonderful, honey. I don't like a bed that gives much. But there's no door between the two rooms, and Stanley—will it be decent?

Stella. Stanley is Polish, you know.

Blanche. Oh, yes. They're something like Irish, aren't they?

Stella. Well—

Blanche. Only not so—highbrow? [*They both laugh again in the same way*] I brought some nice clothes to meet all your lovely friends in.

Stella. I'm afraid you won't think they are lovely.

Blanche. What are they like?

Stella. They're Stanley's friends.

Blanche. Polacks?

Stella. They're a mixed lot, Blanche.

Blanche. Heterogeneous—types?

Stella. Oh, yes. Yes, types is right!

Blanche. Well—anyhow—I brought nice clothes and I'll wear them. I guess you're hoping I'll say I'll put up at a hotel, but I'm not going to put up at a hotel. I want to be near you, got to be with somebody, I can't be alone! Because—as you must have noticed—I'm—not very well . . .

[*Her voice drops and her look is frightened*]

Stella. You seem a little bit nervous or overwrought or something.

Blanche. Will Stanley like me, or will I be just a visiting in-law, Stella? I couldn't stand that.

Stella. You'll get along fine together, if you'll just try not to—well—compare him with men that we went out with at home.

Blanche. Is he so—different?

Stella. Yes. A different species.

Blanche. In what way; what's he like?

Stella. Oh, you can't describe someone you're in love with! Here's a picture of him!

[*She hands a photograph to BLANCHE*]

Blanche. An officer?

Stella. A Master Sergeant in the Engineers' Corps. Those are decorations!

Blanche. He had those on when you met him?

Stella. I assure you I wasn't just blinded by all the brass.

Blanche. That's not what I—

Stella. But of course there were things to adjust myself to later on.

Blanche. Such as his civilian background! [*Stella laughs uncertainly*] How did he take it when you said I was coming?

Stella. Oh, Stanley doesn't know yet.

Blanche [*frightened*]. You—haven't told him?

Stella. He's on the road a good deal.

Blanche. Oh. Travels?

Stella. Yes.

Blanche. Good. I mean—isn't it?

Stella [*half to herself*]. I can hardly stand it when he is away for a night . . .

Blanche. Why, Stella!

Stella. When he's away for a week I nearly go wild!

Blanche. Gracious!

Stella. And when he comes back I cry on his lap like a baby . . .

[*She smiles to herself*]

Blanche. I guess that is what is meant by being in love . . . [*Stella looks up with a radiant smile*] *Stella*—

Stella. What?

Blanche [*in an uneasy rush*]. I haven't asked you the things you probably thought I was going to ask. And so I'll expect you to be understanding about what I have to tell you.

Stella. What, Blanche?

[*Her face turns anxious*]

Blanche. Well, Stella—you're going to reproach me, I know that you're bound to reproach me—but before you do—take into consideration—you left! I stayed and struggled! You came to New Orleans and looked out for yourself! I stayed at *Belle Reve* and tried to hold it together! I'm not meaning this in any reproachful way, but all the burden descended on my shoulders.

Stella. The best I could do was make my own living, Blanche.

[*BLANCHE begins to shake again with intensity*]

Blanche. I know, I know. But you are the one that abandoned *Belle Reve*, not I! I stayed and fought for it, bled for it, almost died for it!

Stella. Stop this hysterical outburst and tell me what's happened? What do you mean fought and bled? What kind of—

Blanche. I knew you would, Stella. I knew you would take this attitude about it!

Stella. About—what?—please!

Blanche [*slowly*]. The loss—the loss . . .

Stella. Belle Reve? Lost, is it? No!

Blanche. Yes, Stella.

[*They stare at each other across the yellow-checked knoleum of the table.*

BLANCHE slowly nods her head and

STELLA looks slowly down at her hands folded on the table. The music of the "blue piano" grows louder.

BLANCHE touches her handkerchief to her forehead]

Stella. But how did it go? What happened?

Blanche [*springing up*]. You're a fine one to ask me how it went!

Stella. Blanche!

Blanche. You're a fine one to sit there accusing me of it!

Stella. Blanche!

Blanche. I, I, I took the blows in my face and my body! All of those deaths! The long parade to the graveyard! Father, mother! Margaret, that dreadful way! So big with it, it couldn't be put in a coffin! But had to be burned like rubbish! You just came home in time for the funerals, Stella. And funerals are pretty compared to deaths. Funerals are quiet, but deaths—not always. Sometimes their breathing is hoarse, and sometimes it rattles, and sometimes they even cry out to you, "Don't let me go!" Even the old, sometimes, say, "Don't let me go." As if you were able to stop them! But funerals are quiet, with pretty flowers. And, oh, what gorgeous boxes they pack them away in! Unless you were there at the bed when they cried out, "Hold me!" you'd never suspect there was the struggle for breath and bleeding. You didn't dream, but I saw! *Saw! Saw!* And now you sit there telling me with your eyes that I let the place go! How in hell do you think all that sickness and dying was paid for? Death is expensive, Miss Stella! And old Cousin Jessie's right after Margaret's, hers! Why, the Grim Reaper had put up his tent on our doorstep! . . . *Stella.* Belle Reve was his headquarters! Honey—that's how it slipped through my

fingers! Which of them left us a fortune? Which of them left a cent of insurance even? Only poor Jessie—one hundred to pay for her coffin. That was all, Stella! And I with my pitiful salary at the school. Yes, accuse me! Sit there and stare at me, thinking I let the place go! I let the place go? Where were you! In bed with your—Polack!

Stella [springing]. *Blanche*! You be still! That's enough!

[*She starts out*]

Blanche. Where are you going?

Stella. I'm going into the bathroom to wash my face.

Blanche. Oh, Stella, Stella, you're crying!

Stella. Does that surprise you?

Blanche. Forgive me—I didn't mean to—

[*The sound of men's voices is heard.*

STELLA goes into the bathroom, closing the door behind her. When the men appear, and BLANCHE realizes it must be STANLEY returning, she moves uncertainly from the bathroom door to the dressing table, looking apprehensively towards the front door. STANLEY enters, followed by STEVE and MITCH. STANLEY pauses near his door, STEVE by the foot of the spiral stair, and MITCH is slightly above and to the right of them, about to go out. As the men enter, we hear some of the following dialogue]

Stanley. Is that how he got it?

Steve. Sure that's how he got it. He hit the old weather-bird for 300 bucks on a six-number-ticket.

Mitch. Don't tell him those things; he'll believe it.

[*MITCH starts out*]

Stanley [restraining *MITCH*]. Hey, Mitch—come back here.

[*BLANCHE, at the sound of voices, retires in the bedroom. She picks up STANLEY's photo from dressing table, looks at it, puts it down. When STANLEY enters the apartment, she darts and hides behind the screen at the head of bed*]

Steve [to *STANLEY and MITCH*]. Hey, are we playin' poker tomorrow?

Stanley. Sure—at Mitch's.

Mitch [hearing this, returns quickly to the stair rail]. No—not at my place. My mother's still sick!

Stanley. Okay, at my place . . . [*MITCH starts out again*] But you bring the beer!

[*MITCH pretends not to hear—calls out "Goodnight all," and goes out, singing.*

EUNICE's voice is heard, above]

Break it up down there! I made the spaghetti dish and ate it myself.

Steve [going upstairs]. I told you and phoned you we was playing. [*To the men*] Jax beer!

Eunice. You never phoned me once.

Steve. I told you at breakfast—and phoned you at lunch . . .

Eunice. Well, never mind about that. You just get yourself home here once in a while.

Steve. You want it in the papers?

[*More laughter and shouts of parting come from the men. STANLEY throws the screen door of the kitchen open and comes in. He is of medium height, about five feet eight or nine, and strongly, compactly built. Animal joy in his being is implicit in all his movements and attitudes. Since earliest manhood the center of his life has been pleasure with women, the giving and taking of it, not with weak indulgence, dependently, but with the power and pride of a richly feathered male bird among hens. Branching out from this complete and satisfying center are all the auxiliary channels of his life, such as his heartiness with men, his appreciation of rough humor, his love of good drink and food and games, his car, his radio, everything that is his, that bears his emblem of the gaudy seed-bearer. He sizes women up at a glance, with sexual classifications, crude images flashing into his mind and determining the way he smiles at them*]

Blanche [drawing involuntarily back from his stare]. You must be Stanley. I'm Blanche.

Stanley. Stella's sister?

Blanche. Yes.

Stanley. H'lo. Where's the little woman?

Blanche. In the bathroom.

Stanley. Oh. Didn't know you were coming in town.

Blanche. I—uh—

Stanley. Where you from, Blanche?

Blanche. Why, I—live in Laurel.

[*He has crossed to the closet and removed the whiskey bottle*]

Stanley. In Laurel, huh? Oh, yeah. Yeah, in Laurel, that's right. Not in my territory. Liquor goes fast in hot weather. [*He holds the bottle to the light to observe its depletion*] Have a shot?

Blanche. No, I—rarely touch it.

Stanley. Some people rarely touch it, but it touches them often.

Blanche [*faintly*]. Ha-ha.

Stanley. My clothes're stickin' to me. Do you mind if I make myself comfortable?

[*He starts to remove his shirt*]

Blanche. Please, please do.

Stanley. Be comfortable is my motto.

Blanche. It's mine, too. It's hard to stay looking fresh. I haven't washed or even powdered my face and—here you are!

Stanley. You know you can catch cold sitting around in damp things, especially when you been exercising hard like bowling is. You're a teacher, aren't you?

Blanche. Yes.

Stanley. What do you teach, Blanche?

Blanche. English.

Stanley. I never was a very good English student. How long you here for, Blanche?

Blanche. I—don't know yet.

Stanley. You going to shack up here?

Blanche. I thought I would if it's not inconvenient for you all.

Stanley. Good.

Blanche. Traveling wears me out.

Stanley. Well, take it easy.

[*A cat screeches near the window.*]

BLANCHE springs up]

Blanche. What's that?

Stanley. Cats . . . Hey, Stella!

Stella [*faintly, from the bathroom*]. Yes, Stanley.

Stanley. Haven't fallen in, have you? [*He grins at BLANCHE. She tries unsuccessfully to smile back. There is a silence*] I'm afraid I'll strike you as being the unrefined type. Stella's spoke of you a good deal. You were married once, weren't you?

[*The music of the polka rises up, faint in the distance*]

Blanche. Yes. When I was quite young.

Stanley. What happened?

Blanche. The boy—the boy died. [*She sinks back down*] I'm afraid I'm—going to be sick!

[*Her head falls on her arms*]

SCENE TWO

It is six o'clock the following evening. BLANCHE is bathing. STELLA is completing her toilette. BLANCHE's dress, a flowered print, is laid out on STELLA's bed.

STANLEY enters the kitchen from outside, leaving the door open on the perpetual "blue piano" around the corner.

Stanley. What's all this monkey doings?

Stella. Oh, Stan! [*She jumps up and kisses him which he accepts with lordly composure*] I'm taking Blanche to Galatoire's for supper and then to a show, because it's your poker night.

Stanley. How about my supper, huh? I'm not going to no Galatoire's for supper!

Stella. I put you a cold plate on ice.

Stanley. Well, isn't that just dandy!

Stella. I'm going to try to keep Blanche out till the party breaks up because I don't know how she would take it. So we'll go to one of the little places in the Quarter afterwards and you'd better give me some money.

Stanley. Where is she?

Stella. She's soaking in a hot tub to quiet her nerves. She's terribly upset.

Stanley. Over what?

Stella. She's been through such an ordeal.

Stanley. Yeah?

Stella. Stan, we've—lost Belle Reve!

Stanley. The place in the country?

Stella. Yes.

Stanley. How?

Stella [*vaguely*]. Oh, it had to be—sacrificed or something. [*There is a pause while STANLEY considers. STELLA is changing into her dress*] When she comes in be sure to say something nice about her appearance. And, oh! Don't mention the baby. I haven't said anything yet, I'm waiting until she gets in a quieter condition.

Stanley [*ominously*]. So?

Stella. And try to understand her and be nice to her, Stan.

Blanche. [*singing in the bathroom*].

"From the land of the sky blue water,
They brought a captive maid!"

Stella. She wasn't expecting to find us in such a small place. You see I'd tried to gloss things over a little in my letters.

Stanley. So?

Stella. And admire her dress and tell her she's looking wonderful. That's important with Blanche. Her little weakness!

Stanley. Yeah. I get the idea. Now let's skip back a little to where you said the country place was disposed of.

Stella. Oh!—yes . . .

Stanley. How about that? Let's have a few more details on that subject.

Stella. It's best not to talk much about it until she's calmed down.

Stanley. So that's the deal, huh? Sister Blanche cannot be annoyed with business details right now!

Stella. You saw how she was last night.

Stanley. Uh-hum, I saw how she was. Now let's have a gander at the bill of sale.

Stella. I haven't seen any.

Stanley. She didn't show you no papers, no deed of sale or nothing like that, huh?

Stella. It seems like it wasn't sold.

Stanley. Well what in hell was it then, give away? To charity?

Stella. Shhh! She'll hear you.

Stanley. I don't care if she hears me. Let's see the papers!

Stella. There weren't any papers, she didn't show any papers, I don't care about papers.

Stanley. Have you ever heard of the Napoleonic code?

Stella. No, Stanley, I haven't heard of the Napoleonic code and if I have, I don't see what it—

Stanley. Let me enlighten you on a point or two, baby.

Stella. Yes?

Stanley. In the state of Louisiana we have the Napoleonic code according to which what belongs to the wife belongs to the husband and vice versa. For instance if I had a piece of property, or you had a piece of property—

Stella. My head is swimming!

Stanley. All right. I'll wait till she gets through soaking in a hot tub and then I'll inquire if *she* is acquainted with the Napoleonic code. It looks to me like you have been swindled, baby, and when you're swindled under the Napoleonic code I'm swindled *too*. And I don't like to be *swindled*.

Stella. There's plenty of time to ask her questions later but if you do now she'll go to pieces again. I don't understand what happened to Belle Reve but you don't know how ridiculous you are being when you suggest that my sister or I or anyone of our family could have perpetrated a swindle on anyone else.

Stanley. Then where's the money if the place was sold?

Stella. Not sold—*lost, lost!* [*He stalks into bedroom, and she follows him*] *Stanley.* [*He pulls open the wardrobe trunk standing in middle of room and jerks out an armful of dresses*]

Stanley. Open your eyes to this stuff! You think she got them out of a teacher's pay?

Stella. Hush!

Stanley. Look at these feathers and furs that she come here to preen herself in! What's this here? A solid-gold dress, I believe! And this one! What is these here? Fox-pieces! [*He blows on them*] Genuine fox fur-pieces, a half a mile long! Where are your fox-pieces, Stella? Bushy snow-white ones, no less! Where are your white fox-pieces?

Stella. Those are inexpensive summer furs that Blanche has had a long time.

Stanley. I got an acquaintance who deals in this sort of merchandise. I'll have him in here to appraise it. I'm willing to bet you there's thousands of dollars invested in this stuff here!

Stella. Don't be such an idiot, Stanley!

[*He hurls the furs to the daybed. Then he jerks open small drawer in the trunk and pulls up a fist-full of costume jewelry*]

Stanley. And what have we here? The treasure chest of a pirate!

Stella. Oh, Stanley!

Stanley. Pearls! Ropes of them! What is this sister of yours, a deep-sea diver? Bracelets of solid gold, too! Where are your pearls and gold bracelets?

Stella. Shhh! Be still, Stanley!

Stanley. And diamonds! A crown for an empress!

Stella. A rhinestone tiara she wore to a costume ball.

Stanley. What's rhinestone?

Stella. Next door to glass.

Stanley. Are you kidding? I have an acquaintance that works in a jewelry store. I'll have him in here to make an appraisal of this. Here's your plantation, or what was left of it, here!

Stella. You have no idea how stupid and horrid you're being! Now close that trunk before she comes out of the bathroom!

[*He kicks the trunk partly closed and sits on the kitchen table*]

Stanley. The Kowalskis and the DuBois have different notions.

Stella [angrily]. Indeed they have, thank heavens!—I'm going outside. [*She snatches up her white hat and gloves and crosses to the outside door*] You come out with me while Blanche is getting dressed.

Stanley. Since when do you give me orders?

Stella. Are you going to stay here and insult her?

Stanley. You're damn tootin' I'm going to stay here.

[*STELLA goes out to the porch.*

[*BLANCHE comes out of the bathroom in a red satin robe*]

Blanche [airily]. Hello, Stanley! Here I am, all freshly bathed and scented, and feeling like a brand new human being!

[*He lights a cigarette*]

Stanley. That's good.

Blanche [drawing the curtains at the windows]. Excuse me while I slip on my pretty new dress!

Stanley. Go right ahead, Blanche.

[*She closes the drapes between the rooms*]

Blanche. I understand there's to be a little card party to which we ladies are cordially not invited!

Stanley [ominously]. Yeah?

[*BLANCHE throws off her robe and slips into a flowered print dress*]

Blanche. Where's Stella?

Stanley. Out on the porch.

Blanche. I'm going to ask a favor of you in a moment.

Stanley. What could that be, I wonder?

Blanche. Some buttons in back! You may enter!

[*He crosses through drapes with a smoldering look*]

How do I look?

Stanley. You look all right.

Blanche. Many thanks! Now the buttons!

Stanley. I can't do nothing with them.

Blanche. You men with your big clumsy fingers. May I have a drag on your cig?

Stanley. Have one for yourself.

Blanche. Why, thanks! . . . It looks like my trunk has exploded.

Stanley. Me an' Stella were helping you unpack.

Blanche. Well, you certainly did a fast and thorough job of it!

Stanley. It looks like you raided some stylish shops in Paris.

Blanche. Ha-ha! Yes—clothes are my passion!

Stanley. What does it cost for a string of fur-pieces like that?

Blanche. Why, those were a tribute from an admirer of mine!

Stanley. He must have had a lot of—admiration!

Blanche. Oh, in my youth I excited some admiration. But look at me now! [*She smiles at him radiantly*] Would you think it possible that I was once considered to be—attractive?

Stanley. Your looks are okay.

Blanche. I was fishing for a compliment, Stanley.

Stanley. I don't go in for that stuff.

Blanche. What—stuff?

Stanley. Compliments to women about their looks. I never met a woman that didn't know if she was good-looking or not without being told, and some of them give themselves credit for more than they've got. I once went out with a doll who said to me, "I am the glamorous type, I am the glamorous type!" I said, "So what?"

Blanche. And what did she say then?

Stanley. She didn't say nothing. That shut her up like a clam.

Blanche. Did it end the romance?

Stanley. It ended the conversation—that was all. Some men are took in by this Hollywood glamor stuff and some men are not.

Blanche. I'm sure you belong in the second category.

Stanley. That's right.

Blanche. I cannot imagine any witch of a woman casting a spell over you.

Stanley. That's—right.

Blanche. You're simple, straightforward and honest, a little bit on the primitive side I should think. To interest you a woman would have to—

[*She pauses with an indefinite gesture*]

Stanley [slowly]. Lay . . . her cards on the table.

Blanche [smiling]. Well, I never cared for wishy-washy people. That was why, when you walked in here last night, I said to myself—"My sister has married a man!"—Of course that was all that I could tell about you.

Stanley [booming]. Now let's cut the re-bop!

Blanche [pressing hands to her ears]. Ouuuuu!

Stella [calling from the steps]. Stanley! You come out here and let Blanche finish dressing!

Blanche. I'm through dressing, honey.

Stella. Well, you come out, then.

Stanley. Your sister and I are having a little talk.

Blanche [lightly]. Honey, do me a favor. Run to the drug-store and get me a lemon-coke with plenty of chipped ice in it!—Will you do that for me, Sweetie?

Stella [uncertainly]. Yes.

[She goes around the corner of the building]

Blanche. The poor little thing was out there listening to us, and I have an idea she doesn't understand you as well as I do. . . . All right; now, Mr. Kowalski, let us proceed without any more double-talk. I'm ready to answer all questions. I've nothing to hide. What is it?

Stanley. There is such a thing in this State of Louisiana as the Napoleonic code, according to which whatever belongs to my wife is also mine—and vice versa.

Blanche. My, but you have an impressive judicial air!

[She sprays herself with her atomizer; then playfully sprays him with it. He seizes the atomizer and slams it down on the dresser. She throws back her head and laughs]

Stanley. If I didn't know that you was my wife's sister I'd get ideas about you!

Blanche. Such as what!

Stanley. Don't play so dumb. You know what!

Blanche [she puts the atomizer on the table]. All right. Cards on the table. That suits me. *[She turns to Stanley]* I know I fib a good deal. After all, a woman's charm is fifty per cent illusion, but when a thing is important I tell the truth, and this is the truth: I haven't cheated my sister or you or anyone else as long as I have lived.

Stanley. Where's the papers? In the trunk?

Blanche. Everything that I own is in that trunk.

[STANLEY crosses to the trunk, shoves it roughly open and begins to open compartments]

Blanche. What in the name of heaven are you thinking of! What's in the back of that little boy's mind of yours? That I am absconding with something, attempting some kind of treachery on my sister?— Let me do that! It will be faster and simpler . . . *[She crosses to the trunk and takes out a box]* I keep my papers mostly in this tin box.

[She opens it]

Stanley. What's them underneath?

[He indicates another sheaf of papers]

Blanche. These are love-letters, yellowing with antiquity, all from one boy. *[He snatches them up. She speaks fiercely]* Give those back to me!

Stanley. I'll have a look at them first!

Blanche. The touch of your hands insults them!

Stanley. Don't pull that stuff!

[He rips off the ribbon and starts to examine them. BLANCHE snatches them from him, and they cascade to the floor]

Blanche. Now that you've touched them I'll burn them!

Stanley [staring, baffled]. What in hell are they?

Blanche [on the floor gathering them up]. Poems a dead boy wrote. I hurt him the way that you would like to hurt me, but you can't! I'm not young and vulnerable any more. But my young husband was and I—never mind about that! Just give them back to me!

Stanley. What do you mean by saying you'll have to burn them?

Blanche. I'm sorry, I must have lost my head for a moment. Everyone has something he won't let others touch because of their—intimate nature . . .

[She now seems faint with exhaustion and she sits down with the strong box and puts on a pair of glasses and goes methodically through a large stack of papers]

Ambler & Ambler. Hmmmmm. . . . Crabtree. . . . More Ambler & Ambler.

Stanley. What is Ambler & Ambler?

Blanche. A firm that made loans on the place.

Stanley. Then it was lost on a mortgage?

Blanche [touching her forehead]. That must've been what happened.

Stanley. I don't want no ifs, ands or buts! What's all the rest of them papers?

[*She hands him the entire box. He carries it to the table and starts to examine the papers*]

Blanche [*picking up a large envelope containing more papers*]. There are thousands of papers, stretching back over hundreds of years, affecting Belle Reve as, piece by piece, our improvident grandfathers and father and uncles and brothers exchanged the land for their epic fornications—to put it plainly! [*She removes her glasses with an exhausted laugh*] The four-letter word deprived us of our plantation, till finally all that was left—and Stella can verify that!—was the house itself and about twenty acres of ground, including a graveyard, to which now all but Stella and I have retreated. [*She pours the contents of the envelope on the table*] Here all of them are, all papers! I hereby endow you with them! Take them, peruse them—commit them to memory, even! I think it's wonderfully fitting that Belle Reve should finally be this bunch of old papers in your big, capable hands! . . . I wonder if Stella's come back with my lemon-coke . . .

[*She leans back and closes her eyes*]

Stanley. I have a lawyer acquaintance who will study these out.

Blanche. Present them to him with a box of aspirin tablets.

Stanley [*becoming somewhat sheepish*]. You see, under the Napoleonic code—a man has to take an interest in his wife's affairs—especially now that she's going to have a baby.

[*BLANCHE opens her eyes. The "blue piano" sounds louder*]

Blanche. Stella? Stella going to have a baby? [*dreamily*] I didn't know she was going to have a baby!

[*She gets up and crosses to the outside door. STELLA appears around the corner with a carton from the drugstore*]

[*Stanley goes into the bedroom with the envelope and the box*]

[*The inner rooms fade to darkness and the outside wall of the house is visible. BLANCHE meets STELLA at the foot of the steps to the sidewalk*]

Blanche. Stella, Stella for star! How lovely to have a baby! It's all right. Everything's all right.

Stella. I'm sorry he did that to you.

Blanche. Oh, I guess he's just not the type that goes for jasmine perfume, but

maybe he's what we need to mix with our blood now that we've lost Belle Reve. We thrashed it out. I feel a bit shaky, but I think I handled it nicely, I laughed and treated it all as a joke. [*STEVE and PABLO appear, carrying a case of beer*] I called him a little boy and laughed and flirted. Yes, I was flirting with your husband! [*As the men approach*] The guests are gathering for the poker party. [*The two men pass between them, and enter the house*] Which way do we go now, Stella—this way?

Stella. No, this way.

[*She leads BLANCHE away*]

Blanche [*laughing*]. The blind are leading the blind!

[*A tamale Vendor is heard calling*]

Vendor's Voice. Red-hot!

SCENE THREE

THE POKER NIGHT

There is a picture of Van Gogh's of a billiard-parlor at night. The kitchen now suggests that sort of lurid nocturnal brilliance, the raw colors of childhood's spectrum. Over the yellow linoleum of the kitchen table hangs an electric bulb with a vivid green glass shade. The poker players—STANLEY, STEVE, MITCH and PABLO—wear colored shirts, solid blues, a purple, a red-and-white check, a light green, and they are men at the peak of their physical manhood, as coarse and direct and powerful as the primary colors. There are vivid slices of watermelon on the table, whiskey bottles and glasses. The bedroom is relatively dim with only the light that spills between the portieres and through the wide window on the street.

For a moment, there is absorbed silence as a hand is dealt.

Steve. Anything wild this deal?

Pablo. One-eyed jacks are wild.

Steve. Give me two cards.

Pablo. You, Mitch?

Mitch. I'm out.

Pablo. One.

Mitch. Anyone want a shot?

Stanley. Yeah. Me.

Pablo. Why don't somebody go to the Chinaman's and bring back a load of chop suey?

Stanley. When I'm losing you want to eat! Ante up! Openers? Openers! get

y'r ass off the table, Mitch. Nothing belongs on a poker table but cards, chips and whiskey.

[He lurches up and tosses some watermelon rinds to the floor]

Mitch. Kind of on your high horse, ain't you?

Stanley. How many?

Steve. Give me three.

Stanley. One.

Mitch. I'm out again. I oughta go home pretty soon.

Stanley. Shut up.

Mitch. I gotta sick mother. She don't go to sleep until I come in at night.

Stanley. Then why don't you stay home with her?

Mitch. She says to go out, so I go, but I don't enjoy it. All the while I keep wondering how she is.

Stanley. Aw, for the sake of Jesus, go home, then!

Pablo. What've you got?

Steve. Spade flush.

Mitch. You all are married. But I'll be alone when she goes—I'm going to the bathroom.

Stanley. Hurry back and we'll fix you a sugar-tit.

Mitch. Aw, go rut.

[He crosses through the bedroom into the bathroom]

Steve *[dealing a hand]*. Seven card stud. *[Telling his joke as he deals]* This ole farmer is out in back of his house sittin' down th'owing corn to the chickens when all at once he hears a loud cackle and this young hen comes lickety split around the side of the house with the rooster right behind her and gaining on her fast.

Stanley *[impatient with the story]*. Deal!

Steve. But when the rooster catches sight of the farmer th'owing the corn he puts on the brakes and lets the hen get away and starts pecking corn. And the old farmer says, "Lord God, I hopes I never gits that hungry!"

[STEVE and PABLO laugh. The sisters appear around the corner of the building]

Stella. The game is still going on.

Blanche. How do I look?

Stella. Lovely, Blanche.

Blanche. I feel so hot and frazzled. Wait till I powder before you open the door. Do I look done in?

Stella. Why no. You are as fresh as a daisy.

Blanche. One that's been picked a few days.

[STELLA opens the door and they enter]

Stella. Well, well, well. I see you boys are still at it!

Stanley. Where you been?

Stella. Blanche and I took in a show. Blanche, this is Mr. Gonzales and Mr. Hubbell.

Blanche. Please don't get up.

Stanley. Nobody's going to get up, so don't be worried.

Stella. How much longer is this game going to continue?

Stanley. Till we get ready to quit.

Blanche. Poker is so fascinating. Could I kibitz?

Stanley. You could not. Why don't you women go up and sit with Eunice?

Stella. Because it is nearly two-thirty. *[BLANCHE crosses into the bedroom and partially closes the portieres]* Couldn't you call it quits after one more hand?

[A chair scrapes. STANLEY gives a loud whack of his hand on her thigh]

Stella *[sharply]*. That's not fun, Stanley.

[The men laugh. STELLA goes into the bedroom]

Stella. It makes me so mad when he does that in front of people.

Blanche. I think I will bathe.

Stella. Again?

Blanche. My nerves are in knots. Is the bathroom occupied?

Stella. I don't know.

[BLANCHE knocks. MITCH opens the door and comes out, still wiping his hands on a towel]

Blanche. Oh!—good evening.

Mitch. Hello.

[He stares at her]

Stella. Blanche, this is Harold Mitchell. My sister, Blanche DuBois.

Mitch *[with awkward courtesy]*. How do you do, Miss DuBois.

Stella. How is your mother now, Mitch?

Mitch. About the same, thanks. She appreciated your sending over that custard. —Excuse me, please.

[He crosses slowly back into the kitchen, glancing back at BLANCHE and coughing a little shyly. He realizes he still has the towel in his hands and with an embarrassed laugh]

hands it to STELLA. BLANCHE looks after him with a certain interest]

Blanche. That one seems—superior to the others.

Stella. Yes, he is.

Blanche. I thought he had a sort of sensitive look.

Stella. His mother is sick.

Blanche. Is he married?

Stella. No.

Blanche. Is he a wolf?

Stella. Why, Blanche! [BLANCHE laughs] I don't think he would be.

Blanche. What does—what does he do?

[She is unbuttoning her blouse]

Stella. He's on the precision bench in the spare parts department. At the plant Stanley travels for.

Blanche. Is that something much?

Stella. No. Stanley's the only one of his crowd that's likely to get anywhere.

Blanche. What makes you think Stanley will?

Stella. Look at him.

Blanche. I've looked at him.

Stella. Then you should know.

Blanche. I'm sorry, but I haven't noticed the stamp of genius even on Stanley's forehead.

[She takes off the blouse and stands in her pink silk brassiere and white skirt in the light through the portieres. The game has continued in undertones]

Stella. It isn't on his forehead and it isn't genius.

Blanche. Oh. Well, what is it, and where? I would like to know.

Stella. It's a drive that he has. You're standing in the light, Blanche!

Blanche. Oh, am I!

[She moves out of the yellow streak of light. STELLA has removed her dress and put on a light blue satin kimono]

Stella [with girlish laughter]. You ought to see their wives.

Blanche [laughingly]. I can imagine. Big, beefy things, I suppose.

Stella. You know that one upstairs? [More laughter] One time [Laughing] the plaster—[Laughing] cracked—

Stanley. You hens cut out that conversation in there!

Stella. You can't hear us.

Stanley. Well, you can hear me and I said to hush up!

Stella. This is my house and I'll talk as much as I want to!

Blanche. Stella, don't start a row.

Stella. He's half drunk!—I'll be out in a minute.

[She goes into the bathroom. BLANCHE rises and crosses leisurely to a small white radio and turns it on]

Stanley. Awright, Mitch, you in?

Mitch. What? Oh!—No, I'm out!

[BLANCHE moves back into the streak of light. She raises her arms and stretches, as she moves indolently back to the chair]

[Rhumba music comes over the radio. Mitch rises at the table]

Stanley. Who turned that on in there?

Blanche. I did. Do you mind?

Stanley. Turn it off!

Steve. Aw, let the girls have their music.

Pablo. Sure, that's good, leave it on!

Steve. Sounds like Xavier Cugat!

[STANLEY jumps up and, crossing to the radio, turns it off. He stops short at the sight of BLANCHE in the chair. She returns his look without flinching. Then he sits again at the poker table]

[Two of the men have started arguing hotly]

Steve. I didn't hear you name it.

Pablo. Didn't I name it, Mitch?

Mitch. I wasn't listenin'.

Pablo. What were you doing, then?

Stanley. He was looking through them drapes. [He jumps up and jerks roughly at curtains to close them] Now deal the hand over again and let's play cards or quit. Some people get ants when they win.

[MITCH rises as STANLEY returns to his seat]

Stanley [yelling]. Sit down!

Mitch. I'm going to the "head." Deal me out.

Pablo. Sure he's got ants now. Seven five-dollar bills in his pants pocket folded up tight as spitballs.

Steve. Tomorrow you'll see him at the cashier's window getting them changed into quarters.

Stanley. And when he goes home he'll deposit them one by one in a piggy bank his mother give him for Christmas. [Dealing] This game is Spit in the Ocean.

[MITCH laughs uncomfortably and continues through the portieres. He stops just inside]

Blanche [softly]. Hello! The Little Boys' Room is busy right now.

Mitch. We've—been drinking beer.

Blanche. I hate beer.

Mitch. It's—a hot weather drink.

Blanche. Oh, I don't think so; it always makes me warmer. Have you got any cigs?

[She has slipped on the dark red satin wrapper]

Mitch. Sure.

Blanche. What kind are they?

Mitch. Luckies.

Blanche. Oh, good. What a pretty case. Silver?

Mitch. Yes. Yes; read the inscription.

Blanche. Oh, is there an inscription? I can't make it out. [He strikes a match and moves closer] Oh! [Reading with feigned difficulty]

"And if God choose,

I shall but love thee better—after—death!"

Why, that's from my favorite sonnet by

Mrs. Browning!

Mitch. You know it?

Blanche. Certainly I do!

Mitch. There's a story connected with that inscription.

Blanche. It sounds like a romance.

Mitch. A pretty sad one.

Blanche. Oh?

Mitch. The girl's dead now.

Blanche [in a tone of deep sympathy]. Oh!

Mitch. She knew she was dying when she gave me this. A very strange girl, very sweet—very!

Blanche. She must have been fond of you. Sick people have such deep, sincere attachments.

Mitch. That's right, they certainly do.

Blanche. Sorrow makes for sincerity, I think.

Mitch. It sure brings it out in people.

Blanche. The little there is belongs to people who have experienced some sorrow.

Mitch. I believe you are right about that.

Blanche. I'm positive that I am. Show me a person who hasn't known any sorrow and I'll show you a shuperial—Listen to me! My tongue is a little—thick! You boys are responsible for it. The show let out at eleven and we couldn't come home on account of the poker game so we had to go somewhere and drink. I'm not accustomed to having more than one drink. Two

is the limit—and three! [She laughs] Tonight I had three.

Stanley. Mitch!

Mitch. Deal me out. I'm talking to Miss—

Blanche. DuBois.

Mitch. Miss DuBois?

Blanche. It's a French name. It means woods and Blanche means white, so the two together mean white woods. Like an orchard in spring! You can remember it by that.

Mitch. You're French?

Blanche. We are French by extraction. Our first American ancestors were French Huguenots.

Mitch. You are Stella's sister, are you not?

Blanche. Yes, Stella is my precious little sister. I call her little in spite of the fact she's somewhat older than I. Just slightly. Less than a year. Will you do something for me?

Mitch. Sure. What?

Blanche. I bought this adorable little colored paper lantern at a Chinese shop on Bourbon. Put it over the light bulb! Will you, please?

Mitch. Be glad to.

Blanche. I can't stand a naked light bulb, any more than I can a rude remark or a vulgar action.

Mitch [adjusting the lantern]. I guess we strike you as being a pretty rough bunch.

Blanche. I'm very adaptable—to circumstances.

Mitch. Well, that's a good thing to be. You are visiting Stanley and Stella?

Blanche. Stella hasn't been so well lately, and I came down to help her for a while. She's very run down.

Mitch. You're not—?

Blanche. Married? No, no. I'm an old maid schoolteacher!

Mitch. You may teach school but you're certainly not an old maid.

Blanche. Thank you, sir! I appreciate your gallantry!

Mitch. So you are in the teaching profession?

Blanche. Yes. Ah, yes . . .

Mitch. Grade school or high school or—Stanley [bellowing]. Mitch!

Mitch. Coming!

Blanche. Gracious, what lung-power! . . . I teach high school. In Laurel.

Mitch. What do you teach? What subject?

Blanche. Guess!

Mitch. I bet you teach art or music? [*Blanche laughs delicately*] Of course I could be wrong. You might teach arithmetic.

Blanche. Never arithmetic, sir, never arithmetic! [*With a laugh*] I don't even know my multiplication tables! No, I have the misfortune of being an English instructor. I attempt to instill a bunch of bobby-soxers and drug-store Romeos with reverence for Hawthorne and Whitman and Poe!

Mitch. I guess that some of them are more interested in other things.

Blanche. How very right you are! Their literary heritage is not what most of them treasure above all else! But they're sweet things! And in the spring, it's touching to notice them making their first discovery of love! As if nobody had ever known it before!

[*The bathroom door opens and STELLA comes out. BLANCHE continues talking to MITCH*]

Oh! Have you finished? Wait—I'll turn on the radio.

[*She turns the knobs on the radio and it begins to play "Wien, Wien, nur du allein." BLANCHE waltzes to the music with romantic gestures. MITCH is delighted and moves in awkward imitation like a dancing bear*]

[*STANLEY stalks fiercely through the portieres into the bedroom. He crosses to the small white radio and snatches it off the table. With a shouted oath, he tosses the instrument out the window*]

Stella. Drunk—drunk—animal thing, you! [*She rushes through to the poker table*] All of you—please go home! If any of you have one spark of decency in you—

Blanche [*wildly*]. Stella, watch out, he's—

[*STANLEY charges after STELLA*]

Men [*feebly*]. Take it easy, Stanley. Easy, fellow— Let's all—

Stella. You lay your hands on me and I'll—

[*She backs out of sight. He advances and disappears. There is the sound of a blow. STELLA cries out. BLANCHE screams and runs into the kitchen. The men rush forward and there is*

grappling and cursing. Something is overturned with a crash]

Blanche [*shrilly*]. My sister is going to have a baby!

Mitch. This is terrible.

Blanche. Lunacy, absolute lunacy!

Mitch. Get him in here, men.

[*STANLEY is forced, pinioned by the two men, into the bedroom. He nearly throws them off. Then all at once he subsides and is limp in their grasp*]

[*They speak quietly and lovingly to him and he leans his face on one of their shoulders*]

Stella [*in a high, unnatural voice, out of sight*]. I want to go away, I want to go away!

Mitch. Poker shouldn't be played in a house with women.

[*BLANCHE rushes into the bedroom*]

Blanche. I want my sister's clothes! We'll go to that woman's upstairs!

Mitch. Where is the clothes?

Blanche [*opening the closet*]. I've got them! [*She rushes through to STELLA*] Stella, Stella, precious! Dear, dear little sister, don't be afraid!

[*With her arms around STELLA, BLANCHE guides her to the outside door and upstairs*]

Stanley [*dully*]. What's the matter; what's happened?

Mitch. You just blew your top, Stan.

Pablo. He's okay, now.

Steve. Sure, my boy's okay!

Mitch. Put him on the bed and get a wet towel.

Pablo. I think coffee would do him a world of good, now.

Stanley [*thickly*]. I want water.

Mitch. Put him under the shower!

[*The men talk quietly as they lead him to the bathroom*]

Stanley. Let the rut go of me, you sons of bitches!

[*Sounds of blows are heard. The water goes on full tilt*]

Steve. Let's get quick out of here!

[*They rush to the poker table and sweep up their winnings on their way out.*]

Mitch [*sadly but firmly*]. Poker should not be played in a house with women.

[*The door closes on them and the place is still. The Negro entertainers in the bar around the corner play "Paper Doll" slow and blue. After a moment*

STANLEY comes out of the bathroom dripping water and still in his clinging wet polka dot drawers.]

Stanley. Stella! [There is a pause] My baby doll's left me!

[He breaks into sobs. Then he goes to the phone and dials, still shuddering with sobs]

Eunice? I want my baby! [He waits a moment; then he hangs up and dials again]

Eunice! I'll keep on ringin' until I talk with my baby!

[An indistinguishable shrill voice is heard. He hurls phone to floor. Dissonant brass and piano sounds as the rooms dim out to darkness and the outer walls appear in the night light. The "blue piano" plays for a brief interval]

[Finally, STANLEY stumbles half-dressed out to the porch and down the wooden steps to the pavement before the building. There he throws back his head like a baying hound and bellows his wife's name: "Stella! Stella, sweetheart! Stella!"]

Stanley. Stell-lahhhhhh!

Eunice [calling down from the door of her upper apartment]. Quit that howling out there an' go back to bed!

Stanley. I want my baby down here. Stella, Stella!

Eunice. She ain't comin' down so you quit! Or you'll git th' law on you!

Stanley. Stella!

Eunice. You can't beat on a woman an' then call 'er back! She won't come! And her goin' t' have a baby! . . . You stinker! You whelp of a Polack, you! I hope they do haul you in and turn the fire hose on you, same as the last time!

Stanley [humbly]. Eunice, I want my girl to come down with me!

Eunice. Hah!

[She slams her door]

Stanley [with heaven-splitting violence]. STELL-LAHHHHH!

[The low-tone clarinet moans. The door upstairs opens again. STELLA slips down the rickety stairs in her robe. Her eyes are glistening with tears and her hair loose about her throat and shoulders. They stare at each other. Then they come together with low, animal moans. He falls to his knees on the steps and presses his

face to her belly, curving a little with maternity. Her eyes go blind with tenderness as she catches his head and raises him level with her. He snatches the screen door open and lifts her off her feet and bears her into the dark flat]

[BLANCHE comes out on the upper landing in her robe and slips fearfully down the steps]

Blanche. Where is my little sister? Stella? Stella?

[She stops before the dark entrance of her sister's flat. Then catches her breath as if struck. She rushes down to the walk before the house. She looks right and left as if for a sanctuary]

[The music fades away. MITCH appears from around the corner]

Mitch. Miss DuBois?

Blanche. Oh!

Mitch. All quiet on the Potomac now?

Blanche. She ran downstairs and went back in there with him.

Mitch. Sure she did.

Blanche. I'm terrified!

Mitch. Ho-ho! There's nothing to be scared of. They're crazy about each other.

Blanche. I'm not used to such—

Mitch. Naw, it's a shame this had to happen when you just got here. But don't take it serious.

Blanche. Violence! Is so—

Mitch. Set down on the steps and have a cigarette with me.

Blanche. I'm not properly dressed.

Mitch. That don't make no difference in the Quarter.

Blanche. Such a pretty silver case.

Mitch. I showed you the inscription, didn't I?

Blanche. Yes. [During the pause, she looks up at the sky] There's so much—so much confusion in the world . . . [He coughs diffidently] Thank you for being so kind! I need kindness now.

SCENE FOUR

It is early the following morning. There is a confusion of street cries like a choral chant.

STELLA is lying down in the bedroom. Her face is serene in the early morning sunlight. One hand rests on her belly, rounding

slightly with new maternity. From the other dangles a book of colored comics. Her eyes and lips have that almost narcotized tranquility that is in the faces of Eastern idols.

The table is sloppy with remains of breakfast and the debris of the preceding night, and STANLEY'S gaudy pyjamas lie across the threshold of the bathroom. The outside door is slightly ajar on a sky of summer brilliance.

BLANCHE appears at this door. She has spent a sleepless night and her appearance entirely contrasts with STELLA'S. She presses her knuckles nervously to her lips as she looks through the door, before entering.

Blanche. Stella?

Stella [stirring lazily]. Hmmh?

[BLANCHE utters a moaning cry and runs into the bedroom, throwing herself down beside STELLA in a rush of hysterical tenderness]

Blanche. Baby, my baby sister!

Stella [drawing away from her]. Blanche, what is the matter with you?

[BLANCHE straightens up slowly and stands beside the bed looking down at her sister with knuckles pressed to her lips]

Blanche. He's left?

Stella. Stan? Yes.

Blanche. Will he be back?

Stella. He's gone to get the car greased. Why?

Blanche. Why! I've been half crazy, Stella! When I found out you'd been insane enough to come back in here after what happened—I started to rush in after you!

Stella. I'm glad you didn't.

Blanche. What were you thinking of? [STELLA makes an indefinite gesture] Answer me! What? What?

Stella. Please, Blanche! Sit down and stop yelling.

Blanche. All right, Stella. I will repeat the question quietly now. How could you come back in this place last night? Why, you must have slept with him!

[STELLA gets up in a calm and leisurely way]

Stella. Blanche, I'd forgotten how excitable you are. You're making much too much fuss about this.

Blanche. Am I?

Stella. Yes, you are, Blanche. I know

how it must have seemed to you and I'm awful sorry it had to happen, but it wasn't anything as serious as you seem to take it. In the first place, when men are drinking and playing poker anything can happen. It's always a powder-keg. He didn't know what he was doing. . . . He was as good as a lamb when I came back and he's really very, very ashamed of himself.

Blanche. And that—that makes it all right?

Stella. No, it isn't all right for anybody to make such a terrible row, but—people do sometimes. Stanley's always smashed things. Why, on our wedding night—soon as we came in here—he snatched off one of my slippers and rushed about the place smashing the light-bulbs with it.

Blanche. He did—what?

Stella. He smashed all the light-bulbs with the heel of my slipper!

[She laughs]

Blanche. And you—you let him? Didn't run, didn't scream?

Stella. I was—sort of—thrilled by it. [She waits for a moment] Eunice and you had breakfast?

Blanche. Do you suppose I wanted any breakfast?

Stella. There's some coffee left on the stove.

Blanche. You're so—matter of fact about it, Stella.

Stella. What other can I be? He's taken the radio to get it fixed. It didn't land on the pavement so only one tube was smashed.

Blanche. And you are standing there smiling!

Stella. What do you want me to do?

Blanche. Pull yourself together and face the facts.

Stella. What are they, in your opinion?

Blanche. In my opinion? You're married to a madman!

Stella. No!

Blanche. Yes, you are, your fix is worse than mine is! Only you're not being sensible about it. I'm going to do something. Get hold of myself and make myself a new life!

Stella. Yes?

Blanche. But you've given in. And that isn't right, you're not old! You can get out.

Stella [slowly and emphatically]. I'm not in anything I want to get out of.

Blanche [incredulously]. What—Stella?

Stella. I said I am not in anything that I have a desire to get out of. Look at the mess in this room! And those empty bottles! They went through two cases last night! He promised this morning that he was going to quit having these poker parties, but you know how long such a promise is going to keep. Oh, well, it's his pleasure, like mine is movies and bridge. People have got to tolerate each other's habits, I guess.

Blanche. I don't understand you. [*STELLA turns toward her*] I don't understand your indifference. Is this a Chinese philosophy you've—cultivated?

Stella. Is what—what?

Blanche. This—shuffling about and mumbling—'One tube smashed—beer-bottles—mess in the kitchen.'—as if nothing out of the ordinary has happened!

[*STELLA laughs uncertainly and picking up the broom, twirls it in her hands*]

Blanche. Are you deliberately shaking that thing in my face?

Stella. No.

Blanche. Stop it. Let go of that broom. I won't have you cleaning up for him!

Stella. Then who's going to do it? Are you?

Blanche. I? I!

Stella. No, I didn't think so.

Blanche. Oh, let me think, if only my mind would function! We've got to get hold of some money, that's the way out!

Stella. I guess that money is always nice to get hold of.

Blanche. Listen to me. I have an idea of some kind. [*Shakily she twists a cigarette into her holder*] Do you remember Shep Huntleigh? [*STELLA shakes her head*] Of course you remember Shep Huntleigh. I went out with him at college and wore his pin for a while. Well—

Stella. Well?

Blanche. I ran into him last winter. You know I went to Miami during the Christmas holidays?

Stella. No.

Blanche. Well, I did. I took the trip as an investment, thinking I'd meet someone with a million dollars.

Stella. Did you?

Blanche. Yes. I ran into Shep Huntleigh—I ran into him on Biscayne Boulevard, on Christmas Eve, about dusk . . . getting into his car—Cadillac convertible; must have been a block long!

Stella. I should think it would have been—inconvenient in traffic?

Blanche. You've heard of oil-wells?

Stella. Yes—remotely.

Blanche. He has them, all over Texas. Texas is literally spouting gold in his pockets.

Stella. My, my.

Blanche. Y'know how indifferent I am to money. I think of money in terms of what it does for you. But he could do it, he could certainly do it!

Stella. Do what, Blanche?

Blanche. Why—set us up in a—shop!

Stella. What kind of a shop?

Blanche. Oh, a—shop of some kind! He could do it with half what his wife throws away at the races.

Stella. He's married?

Blanche. Honey, would I be here if the man weren't married? [*STELLA laughs a little. BLANCHE suddenly springs up and crosses to phone. She speaks shrilly*] How do I get Western Union?—Operator! Western Union!

Stella. That's a dial phone, honey.

Blanche. I can't dial, I'm too—

Stella. Just dial O.

Blanche. O?

Stella. Yes, "O" for Operator!

[*BLANCHE considers a moment; then she puts the phone down*]

Blanche. Give me a pencil. Where is a slip of paper? I've got to write it down first—the message, I mean . . . [*She goes to the dressing table, and grabs up a sheet of Kleenex and an eyebrow pencil for writing equipment*] Let me see now . . . [*she bites the pencil*] 'Darling Shep. Sister and I in desperate situation.'

Stella. I beg your pardon!

Blanche. 'Sister and I in desperate situation. Will explain details later. Would you be interested in—?' [*She bites the pencil again*] 'Would you be—interested—in . . . ' [*She smashes the pencil on the table and springs up*] You never get anywhere with direct appeals!

Stella [*with a laugh*]. Don't be so ridiculous, darling!

Blanche. But I'll think of something, I've got to think of—something! Don't, don't laugh at me, Stella! Please, please don't—I—I want you to look at the contents of my purse! Here's what's in it! [*She snatches*

her purse open] Sixty-five measly cents in of the realm!

Stella [crossing to bureau]. Stanley doesn't give me a regular allowance, he likes to pay bills himself, but—this morning he gave me ten dollars to smooth things over. You take five of it, Blanche, and I'll keep the rest.

Blanche. Oh, no. No, Stella.

Stella [insisting]. I know how it helps your morale just having a little pocket-money on you.

Blanche. No, thank you—I'll take to the streets!

Stella. Talk sense! How did you happen to get so low on funds?

Blanche. Money just goes—it goes places. [She rubs her forehead] Sometime today I've got to get hold of a bromo!

Stella. I'll fix you one now.

Blanche. Not yet—I've got to keep thinking!

Stella. I wish you'd just let things go, at least for a—while . . .

Blanche. Stella, I can't live with him! You can, he's your husband. But how could I stay here with him, after last night, with just those curtains between us?

Stella. Blanche, you saw him at his worst last night.

Blanche. On the contrary, I saw him at his best! What such a man has to offer is animal force and he gave a wonderful exhibition of that! But the only way to live with such a man is to—go to bed with him! And that's your job—not mine!

Stella. After you've rested a little, you'll see it's going to work out. You don't have to worry about anything while you're here. I mean—expenses . . .

Blanche. I have to plan for us both, to get us both—out!

Stella. You take it for granted that I am in something that I want to get out of.

Blanche. I take it for granted that you still have sufficient memory of Belle Reve to find this place and these poker players impossible to live with.

Stella. Well, you're taking entirely too much for granted.

Blanche. I can't believe you're in earnest.

Stella. No?

Blanche. I understand how it happened—a little. You saw him in uniform, an officer, not here but—

Stella. I'm not sure it would have made any difference where I saw him.

Blanche. Now don't say it was one of those mysterious electric things between people! If you do I'll laugh in your face.

Stella. I am not going to say anything more at all about it!

Blanche. All right, then, don't!

Stella. But there are things that happen between a man and a woman in the dark—that sort of make everything else seem—unimportant.

[Pause]

Blanche. What you are talking about is brutal desire—just—Desire!—the name of that rattle-trap streetcar that bangs through the Quarter, up one old narrow street and down another . . .

Stella. Haven't you ever ridden on that streetcar?

Blanche. It brought me here.—Where I'm not wanted and where I'm ashamed to be . . .

Stella. Then don't you think your superior attitude is a bit out of place?

Blanche. I am not being or feeling at all superior, Stella. Believe me I'm not! It's just this. This is how I look at it. A man like that is someone to go out with—once—twice—three times when the devil is in you. But live with? Have a child by?

Stella. I have told you I love him.

Blanche. Then I tremble for you! I just—tremble for you. . . .

Stella. I can't help your trembling if you insist on trembling!

[There is a pause]

Blanche. May I—speak—plainly?

Stella. Yes, do. Go ahead. As plainly as you want to.

[Outside, a train approaches. They are silent till the noise subsides. They are both in the bedroom]

[Under cover of the train's noise STANLEY enters from outside. He stands unseen by the women, holding some packages in his arms, and overhears their following conversation. He wears an undershirt and grease-stained seersucker pants]

Blanche. Well—if you'll forgive me—he's common!

Stella. Why, yes, I suppose he is.

Blanche. Suppose! You can't have forgotten that much of our bringing up, Stella, that you just suppose that any part of a

gentleman's in his nature! *Not one particle, no!* Oh, if he was just—ordinary! Just plain—but good and wholesome, but—no. There's something downright—bestial—about him! You're hating me saying this, aren't you?

Stella [coldly]. Go on and say it all, Blanche.

Blanche. He acts like an animal, has an animal's habits! Eats like one, moves like one, talks like one! There's even something—sub-human—something not quite to the stage of humanity yet! Yes, something—ape-like about him, like one of those pictures I've seen in—anthropological studies! Thousands and thousands of years have passed him right by, and there he is—Stanley Kowalski—survivor of the stone age! Bearing the raw meat home from the kill in the jungle! And you—you here—waiting for him! Maybe he'll strike you or maybe grunt and kiss you! That is, if kisses have been discovered yet! Night falls and the other apes gather! There in the front of the cave, all grunting like him, and swilling and gnawing and hulking! His poker night!—you call it—this party of apes! Somebody growls—some creature snatches at something—the fight is on! *God!* Maybe we are a long way from being made in God's image, but Stella—my sister—there has been some progress since then! Such things as art—as poetry and music—such kinds of new light have come into the world since then! In some kinds of people some tenderer feelings have had some little beginning! That we have got to make grow! And cling to, and hold as our flag! In this dark march toward whatever it is we're approaching. . . . *Don't—don't hang back with the brutes!*

[*Another train passes outside. STANLEY hesitates, licking his lips. Then suddenly he turns stealthily about and withdraws through front door. The women are still unaware of his presence. When the train has passed he calls through the closed front door*]

Stanley. Hey! Hey, Stella!

Stella [who has listened gravely to BLANCHE]. Stanley!

Blanche. Stell, I—

[*But STELLA has gone to the front door.*

STANLEY enters casually with his packages]

Stanley. Hiyuh, Stella. Blanche back?

Stella. Yes, she's back.

Stanley. Hiyuh, Blanche.

[*He grins at her*]

Stella. You must've got under the car.

Stanley. Them darn mechanics at Fritz's don't know their ass fr'm—*Hey!*

[*STELLA has embraced him with both arms, fiercely, and full in the view of BLANCHE. He laughs and clasps her head to him. Over her head he grins through the curtains at BLANCHE*]

[*As the lights fade away, with a lingering brightness on their embrace, the music of the "blue piano" and trumpet and drums is heard*]

SCENE FIVE

BLANCHE is seated in the bedroom fanning herself with a palm leaf as she reads over a just completed letter. Suddenly she bursts into a peal of laughter. STELLA is dressing in the bedroom.

Stella. What are you laughing at, honey?

Blanche. Myself, myself, for being such a liar! I'm writing a letter to Shep. [*She picks up the letter*] "Darling Shep. I am spending the summer on the wing, making flying visits here and there. And who knows, perhaps I shall take a sudden notion to swoop down on Dallas! How would you feel about that? Ha-ha! [*She laughs nervously and brightly, touching her throat as if actually talking to Shep*] Forewarned is forearmed, as they say!"—How does that sound?

Stella. Uh-huh. . .

Blanche [going on nervously]. "Most of my sister's friends go north in the summer but some have homes on the Gulf and there has been a continued round of entertainments, teas, cocktails, and luncheons—"

[*A disturbance is heard upstairs at the Hubbell's apartment*]

Stella. Eunice seems to be having some trouble with Steve.

[*EUNICE'S voice shouts in terrible wrath*]

Eunice. I heard about you and that blonde!

Steve. That's a damn lie!

Eunice. You ain't pulling the wool over my eyes! I wouldn't mind if you'd stay down at the Four Deuces, but you always going up.

Steve. Who ever seen me up?

Eunice. I seen you chasing her 'round the balcony—I'm gonna call the vice squad!

Steve. Don't you throw that at me!

Eunice [*shrieking*]. You hit me! I'm gonna call the police!

[*A clatter of aluminum striking a wall is heard, followed by a man's angry roar, shouts and overturned furniture. There is a crash; then a relative hush*]

Blanche [*brightly*]. Did he kill her?

[EUNICE appears on the steps in daemonic disorder]

Stella. No! She's coming downstairs.

Eunice. Call the police. I'm going to call the police!

[*She rushes around the corner*]

[*They laugh lightly. STANLEY comes around the corner in his green and scarlet silk bowling shirt. He trots up the steps and bangs into the kitchen.*

BLANCHE registers his entrance with nervous gestures]

Stanley. What's a matter with Eun-uss?

Stella. She and Steve had a row. Has she got the police?

Stanley. Naw. She's gettin' a drink.

Stella. That's much more practical!

[STEVE comes down nursing a bruise on his forehead and looks in the door]

Steve. She here?

Stanley. Naw, naw. At the Four Deuces.

Steve. That rutting hunk!

[*He looks around the corner a bit timidly, then turns with affected boldness and runs after her*]

Blanche. I must jot that down in my notebook. Ha-ha! I'm compiling a notebook of quaint little words and phrases I've picked up here.

Stanley. You won't pick up nothing here you ain't heard before.

Blanche. Can I count on that?

Stanley. You can count on it up to five hundred.

Blanche. That's a mighty high number. [*He jerks open the bureau drawer, slams it shut and throws shoes in a corner. At each noise BLANCHE winces slightly. Finally she speaks*] What sign were you born under?

Stanley [*while he is dressing*]. Sign?

Blanche. Astrological sign. I bet you were born under Aries. Aries people are forceful and dynamic. They dote on noise! They love to bang things around! You must have had lots of banging around in the

army and now that you're out, you make up for it by treating inanimate objects with such a fury!

[STELLA has been going in and out of closet during this scene. Now she pops her head out of the closet]

Stella. Stanley was born just five minutes after Christmas.

Blanche. Capricorn—the Goat!

Stanley. What sign were you born under?

Blanche. Oh, my birthday's next month, the fifteenth of September; that's under Virgo.

Stanley. What's Virgo?

Blanche. Virgo is the Virgin.

Stanley [*contemptuously*]. Hah! [*He advances a little as he knots his tie*] Say, do you happen to know somebody named Shaw?

[*Her face expresses a faint shock. She reaches for the cologne bottle and dampens her handkerchief as she answers carefully*]

Blanche. Why, everybody knows somebody named Shaw!

Stanley. Well, this somebody named Shaw is under the impression he met you in Laurel, but I figure he must have got you mixed up with some other party because this other party is someone he met at a hotel called the Flamingo.

[BLANCHE laughs breathlessly as she touches the cologne-dampened handkerchief to her temples]

Blanche. I'm afraid he does have me mixed up with this "other party." The Hotel Flamingo is not the sort of establishment I would dare to be seen in!

Stanley. You know of it?

Blanche. Yes, I've seen it and smelled it.

Stanley. You must've got pretty close if you could smell it.

Blanche. The odor of cheap perfume is penetrating.

Stanley. That stuff you use is expensive?

Blanche. Twenty-five dollars an ounce! I'm nearly out. That's just a hint if you want to remember my birthday!

[*She speaks lightly but her voice has a note of fear*]

Stanley. Shaw must've got you mixed up. He goes in and out of Laurel all the time so he can check on it and clear up any mistake.

[*He turns away and crosses to the portieres. BLANCHE closes her eyes as if faint. Her hand trembles as she*

lifts the handkerchief again to her forehead]

[*STEVE and EUNICE come around corner.*

STEVE'S arm is around EUNICE'S shoulder and she is sobbing luxuriously and he is cooing love-words. There is a murmur of thunder as they go slowly upstairs in a tight embrace]

Stanley [to STELLA]. I'll wait for you at the Four Deuces!

Stella. Hey! Don't I rate one kiss?

Stanley. Not in front of your sister.

[*He goes out. BLANCHE rises from her chair. She seems faint; looks about her with an expression of almost panic]*

Blanche. Stella! What have you heard about me?

Stella. Huh?

Blanche. What have people been telling you about me?

Stella. Telling?

Blanche. You haven't heard any—unkind—gossip about me?

Stella. Why, no, Blanche, of course not!

Blanche. Honey, there was—a good deal of talk in Laurel.

Stella. About you, Blanche?

Blanche. I wasn't so good the last two years or so, after Belle Reve had started to slip through my fingers.

Stella. All of us do things we—

Blanche. I never was hard or self-sufficient enough. When people are soft—soft people have got to shimmer and glow—they've got to put on soft colors, the colors of butterfly wings, and put a—paper lantern over the light. . . . It isn't enough to be soft. You've got to be soft and attractive. And I—I'm fading now! I don't know how much longer I can turn the trick.

[*The afternoon has faded to dusk.*

STELLA goes into the bedroom and turns on the light under the paper lantern. She holds a bottled soft drink in her hand]

Blanche. Have you been listening to me?

Stella. I don't listen to you when you are being morbid!

[*She advances with the bottled coke]*

Blanche [with abrupt change to gaiety]. Is that coke for me?

Stella. Not for anyone else!

Blanche. Why, you precious thing, you! Is it just coke?

Stella [turning]. You mean you want a shot in it!

Blanche. Well, honey, a shot never does a coke any harm! Let me! You mustn't wait on me!

Stella. I like to wait on you, Blanche. It makes it seem more like home.

[*She goes into the kitchen, finds a glass and pours a shot of whiskey into it]*

Blanche. I have to admit I love to be waited on. . . . [*She rushes into the bedroom. Stella goes to her with the glass. Blanche suddenly clutches Stella's free hand with a moaning sound and presses the hand to her lips. Stella is embarrassed by her show of emotion. Blanche speaks in a choked voice]* You're—you're—so good to me! And I—

Stella. Blanche.

Blanche. I know, I won't! You hate me to talk sentimental! But honey, believe I feel things more than I tell you! I won't stay long! I won't, I promise I—

Stella. Blanche!

Blanche [hysterically]. I won't, I promise, I'll go! Go soon! I will really! I won't hang around until he—throws me out . . .

Stella. Now will you stop talking foolish?

Blanche. Yes, honey. Watch how you pour—that fizzy stuff foams over!

[*BLANCHE laughs shrilly and grabs the glass, but her hand shakes so it almost slips from her grasp. STELLA pours the coke into the glass. It foams over and spills. BLANCHE gives a piercing cry]*

Stella [shocked by the cry]. Heavens!

Blanche. Right on my pretty white skirt!

Stella. Oh . . . Use my hanky. Blot gently.

Blanche [slowly recovering]. I know—gently—gently . . .

Stella. Did it stain?

Blanche. Not a bit. Ha-ha! Isn't that lucky?

[*She sits down shaking, taking a grateful drink. She holds the glass in both hands and continues to laugh a little]*

Stella. Why did you scream like that?

Blanche. I don't know why I screamed! [Continuing nervously] Mitch—Mitch is coming at seven. I guess I am just feeling nervous about our relations. [She begins to talk rapidly and breathlessly] He hasn't gotten a thing but a goodnight kiss, that's all I have given him, Stella. I want his

respect. And men don't want anything they get too easy. But on the other hand men lose interest quickly. Especially when the girl is over—thirty. They think a girl over thirty ought to—the vulgar term is—"put out." . . . And I—I'm not "putting out." Of course he—he doesn't know—I mean I haven't informed him—of my real age!

Stella. Why are you sensitive about your age?

Blanche. Because of hard knocks my vanity's been given. What I mean is—he thinks I'm sort of—prim and proper, you know! [*She laughs out sharply*] I want to deceive him enough to make him—want me . . .

Stella. Blanche, do you want him?

Blanche. I want to rest! I want to breathe quietly again! Yes—I want Mitch . . . very badly! Just think! If it happens! I can leave here and not be anyone's problem . . .

[*STANLEY comes around the corner with a drink under his belt*]

Stanley [bawling]. Hey, Steve! Hey, Eunice! Hey, Stella!

[*There are joyous calls from above. Trumpet and drums are heard from around the corner*]

Stella [kissing *BLANCHE* impulsively]. It will happen!

Blanche [doubtfully]. It will?

Stella. It will! [*She goes across into the kitchen, looking back at BLANCHE*] It will, honey, it will. . . . But don't take another drink!

[*Her voice catches as she goes out the door to meet her husband*]

[*BLANCHE sinks faintly back in her chair with her drink. EUNICE shrieks with laughter and runs down the steps. STEVE bounds after her with goat-like screeches and chases her around corner. STANLEY and STELLA twine arms as they follow, laughing*]

[*Dusk settles deeper. The music from the Four Deuces is slow and blue*]

Blanche. Ah, me, ah, me, ah, me . . .

[*Her eyes fall shut and the palm leaf fan drops from her fingers. She slaps her hand on the chair arm a couple of times. There is a little glimmer of lightning about the building*]

[*A YOUNG MAN comes along the street and rings the bell*]

Blanche. Come in.

[*The YOUNG MAN appears through the portieres. She regards him with interest*]

Blanche. Well, well! What can I do for you?

Young Man. I'm collecting for *The Evening Star*.

Blanche. I didn't know that stars took up collections.

Young Man. It's the paper.

Blanche. I know. I was joking—feebly! Will you—have a drink?

Young Man. No, ma'am. No, thank you. I can't drink on the job.

Blanche. Oh, well, now, let's see. . . . No, I don't have a dime! I'm not the lady of the house. I'm her sister from Mississippi. I'm one of those poor relations you've heard about.

Young Man. That's all right. I'll drop by later.

[*He starts to go out. She approaches a little*]

Blanche. Hey! [*He turns back shyly. She puts a cigarette in a long holder*] Could you give me a light?

[*She crosses toward him. They meet at the door between the two rooms*]

Young Man. Sure. [*He takes out a lighter*] This doesn't always work.

Blanche. It's temperamental? [*It flares*] Ah!—thank you. [*He starts away again*] Hey! [*He turns again, still more uncertainly. She goes close to him*] Uh—what time is it?

Young Man. Fifteen of seven, ma'am.

Blanche. So late? Don't you just love these long rainy afternoons in New Orleans when an hour isn't just an hour—but a little piece of eternity dropped into your hands—and who knows what to do with it? [*She touches his shoulders*] You—uh—didn't get wet in the rain?

Young Man. No, ma'am. I stepped inside.

Blanche. In a drug store? And had a soda?

Young Man. Uh-huh.

Blanche. Chocolate?

Young Man. No, ma'am. Cherry.

Blanche [laughing]. Cherry!

Young Man. A cherry soda.

Blanche. You make my mouth water.

[*She touches his cheek lightly, and smiles. Then she goes to the trunk*]

Young Man. Well, I'd better be going—

Blanche [stopping him]. Young man!

[He turns. She takes a large, gossamer scarf from the trunk and drapes it about her shoulders]

[In the ensuing pause, the "blue piano" is heard. It continues through the rest of this scene and the opening of the next. The young man clears his throat and looks yearningly at the door]

Young man! Young, young, young man! Has anyone ever told you that you look like a young Prince out of the Arabian Nights?

[The young man laughs uncomfortably and stands like a bashful kid.]

BLANCHE speaks softly to him]

Well, you do, honey lamb! Come here. I want to kiss you, just once, softly and sweetly on your mouth!

[Without waiting for him to accept, she crosses quickly to him and presses her lips to his]

Now run along, now, quickly. It would be nice to keep you, but I've got to be good—and keep my hands off children.

[He stares at her a moment. She opens the door for him and blows a kiss at him as he goes down the steps with a dazed look. She stands there a little dreamily after he has disappeared. Then MITCH appears around the corner with a bunch of roses]

Blanche [gaily]. Look who's coming! My Rosenkavalier! Bow to me first . . . now present them! Ahhh—Merciùù!

[She looks at him over them, coquettishly pressing them to her lips. He beams at her self-consciously]

SCENE SIX

It is about two A.M. on the same evening. The outer wall of the building is visible. BLANCHE and MITCH come in. The utter exhaustion which only a neurasthenic personality can know is evident in BLANCHE's voice and manner. MITCH is stolid but depressed. They have probably been out to the amusement park on Lake Pontchartrain, for MITCH is bearing, upside down, a plaster statuette of Mae West, the sort of prize won at shooting-galleries and carnival games of chance.

Blanche [stopping lifelessly at the steps]. Well— [MITCH laughs uneasily] Well . . .

Mitch. I guess it must be pretty late—and you're tired.

Blanche. Even the hot tamale man has deserted the street, and he hangs on till the end. [MITCH laughs uneasily again] How will you get home?

Mitch. I'll walk over to Bourbon and catch an owl-car.

Blanche [laughing grimly]. Is that street-car named Desire still grinding along the tracks at this hour?

Mitch [heavily]. I'm afraid you haven't gotten much fun out of this evening, Blanche.

Blanche. I spoiled it for you.

Mitch. No, you didn't, but I felt all the time that I wasn't giving you much—entertainment.

Blanche. I simply couldn't rise to the occasion. That was all. I don't think I've ever tried so hard to be gay and made such a dismal mess of it. I get ten points for trying!—I did try.

Mitch. Why did you try if you didn't feel like it, Blanche?

Blanche. I was just obeying the law of nature.

Mitch. Which law is that?

Blanche. The one that says the lady must entertain the gentleman—or no dice! See if you can locate my door-key in this purse. When I'm so tired my fingers are all thumbs!

Mitch [rooting in her purse]. This it?

Blanche. No, honey, that's the key to my trunk which I must soon be packing.

Mitch. You mean you are leaving here soon?

Blanche. I've outstayed my welcome.

Mitch. This it?

[The music fades away]

Blanche. Eureka! Honey, you open the door while I take a last look at the sky. [She leans on the porch rail. He opens the door and stands awkwardly behind her] I'm looking for the Pleiades, the Seven Sisters, but these girls are not out tonight. Oh, yes they are, there they are! God bless them! All in a bunch going home from their little bridge party. . . . Y'get the door open? Good boy! I guess you—want to go now . . .

[He shuffles and coughs a little]

Mitch. Can I—uh—kiss you—goodnight?

Blanche. Why do you always ask me if you may?

Mitch. I don't know whether you want me to or not.

Blanche. Why should you be so doubtful?

Mitch. That night when we parked by the lake and I kissed you, you—

Blanche. Honey, it wasn't the kiss I objected to. I liked the kiss very much. It was the other little—familiarity—that I—felt obliged to—discourage. . . . I didn't resent it! Not a bit in the world! In fact, I was somewhat flattered that you—desired me! But, honey, you know as well as I do that a single girl, a girl alone in the world, has got to keep a firm hold on her emotions or she'll be lost!

Mitch [solemnly]. Lost?

Blanche. I guess you are used to girls that like to be lost. The kind that get lost immediately, on the first date!

Mitch. I like you to be exactly the way that you are, because in all my—experience—I have never known anyone like you.

[BLANCHE looks at him gravely; then she bursts into laughter and then claps a hand to her mouth]

Mitch. Are you laughing at me?

Blanche. No, honey. The lord and lady of the house have not yet returned, so come in. We'll have a night-cap. Let's leave the lights off. Shall we?

Mitch. You just—do what you want to.

[BLANCHE precedes him into the kitchen. The outer wall of the building disappears and the interiors of the two rooms can be dimly seen]

Blanche [remaining in the first room]. The other room's more comfortable—go on in. This crashing around in the dark is my search for some liquor.

Mitch. You want a drink?

Blanche. I want you to have a drink! You have been so anxious and solemn all evening, and so have I; we have both been anxious and solemn and now for these few last remaining moments of our lives together—I want to create—*joie de vivre*! I'm lighting a candle.

Mitch. That's good.

Blanche. We are going to be very Bohemian. We are going to pretend that we are sitting in a little artists' cafe on the Left Bank in Paris! [She lights a candle stub and puts it in a bottle] *Je suis la Dame aux Camelias! Vous êtes—Armand!* Understand French?

Mitch [heavily]. Naw. Naw, I—

Blanche. *Voulez-vous coucher avec moi ce soir? Vous ne comprenez pas? Ah, quelle dommage!*—I mean it's a damned good thing. . . . I've found some liquor! Just enough for two shots without any dividends, honey . . .

Mitch [heavily]. That's—good.

[She enters the bedroom with the drinks and the candle]

Blanche. Sit down! Why don't you take off your coat and loosen your collar?

Mitch. I better leave it on.

Blanche. No. I want you to be comfortable.

Mitch. I am ashamed of the way I perspire. My shirt is sticking to me.

Blanche. Perspiration is healthy. If people didn't perspire they would die in five minutes. [She takes his coat from him] This is a nice coat. What kind of material is it?

Mitch. They call that stuff alpaca.

Blanche. Oh. Alpaca.

Mitch. It's very light weight alpaca.

Blanche. Oh. Light weight alpaca.

Mitch. I don't like to wear a wash-coat even in summer because I sweat through it.

Blanche. Oh.

Mitch. And it don't look neat on me. A man with a heavy build has got to be careful of what he puts on him so he don't look too clumsy.

Blanche. You are not too heavy.

Mitch. You don't think I am?

Blanche. You are not the delicate type. You have a massive bone-structure and a very imposing physique.

Mitch. Thank you. Last Christmas I was given a membership to the New Orleans Athletic Club.

Blanche. Oh, good.

Mitch. It was the finest present I ever was given. I work out there with the weights and I swim and I keep myself fit. When I started there, I was getting soft in the belly but now my belly is hard. It is so hard now that a man can punch me in the belly and it don't hurt me. Punch me! Go on! See?

[She pokes lightly at him]

Blanche. Gracious.

[Her hand touches his chest]

Mitch. Guess how much I weigh, Blanche?

Blanche. Oh, I'd say in the vicinity of—one hundred and eighty?

Mitch. Guess again.

Blanche. Not that much?

Mitch. No. More.

Blanche. Well, you're a tall man and you can carry a good deal of weight without looking awkward.

Mitch. I weigh two hundred and seven pounds and I'm six feet one and one half inches tall in my bare feet—without shoes on. And that is what I weigh stripped.

Blanche. Oh, my goodness, me! It's awe-inspiring.

Mitch. [embarrassed]. My weight is not a very interesting subject to talk about. [He hesitates for a moment] What's yours?

Blanche. My weight?

Mitch. Yes.

Blanche. Guess!

Mitch. Let me lift you.

Blanche. Samson! Go on, lift me. [He comes behind her and puts his hands on her waist and raises her lightly off the ground] Well?

Mitch. You are light as a feather.

Blanche. Ha-ha! [He lowers her but keeps his hands on her waist. BLANCHE speaks with an affectation of demureness] You may release me now.

Mitch. Huh?

Blanche. [gaily]. I said unhand me, sir. [He fumblingly embraces her. Her voice sounds gently reproving] Now, Mitch. Just because Stanley and Stella aren't at home is no reason why you shouldn't behave like a gentleman.

Mitch. Just give me a slap whenever I step out of bounds.

Blanche. That won't be necessary. You're a natural gentleman, one of the very few that are left in the world. I don't want you to think that I am severe and old maid schoolteacherish or anything like that. It's just—well—

Mitch. Huh?

Blanche. I guess it is just that I have—old-fashioned ideals!

[She rolls her eyes, knowing he cannot see her face. MITCH goes to the front door. There is a considerable silence between them. BLANCHE sighs and MITCH coughs self-consciously]

Mitch. [finally]. Where's Stanley and Stella tonight?

Blanche. They have gone out. With Mr. and Mrs. Hubbell upstairs.

Mitch. Where did they go?

Blanche. I think they were planning to go to a midnight prevue at Loew's State.

Mitch. We should all go out together some night.

Blanche. No. That wouldn't be a good plan.

Mitch. Why not?

Blanche. You are an old friend of Stanley's?

Mitch. We was together in the Two-forty-first.

Blanche. I guess he talks to you frankly?

Mitch. Sure.

Blanche. Has he talked to you about me?

Mitch. Oh—not very much.

Blanche. The way you say that, I suspect that he has.

Mitch. No, he hasn't said much.

Blanche. But what he *has* said. What would you say his attitude toward me was?

Mitch. Why do you want to ask that?

Blanche. Well—

Mitch. Don't you get along with him?

Blanche. What do you think?

Mitch. I don't think he understands you.

Blanche. That is putting it mildly. If it weren't for Stella about to have a baby, I wouldn't be able to endure things here.

Mitch. He isn't—nice to you?

Blanche. He is insufferably rude. Goes out of his way to offend me.

Mitch. In what way, Blanche?

Blanche. Why, in every conceivable way.

Mitch. I'm surprised to hear that.

Blanche. Are you?

Mitch. Well, I—don't see how anybody could be rude to you.

Blanche. It's really a pretty frightful situation. You see, there's no privacy here. There's just these portieres between the two rooms at night. He stalks through the rooms in his underwear at night. And I have to ask him to close the bathroom door. That sort of commonness isn't necessary. You probably wonder why I don't move out. Well, I'll tell you frankly. A teacher's salary is barely sufficient for her living-expenses. I didn't save a penny last year and so I had to come here for the summer. That's why I have to put up with my sister's husband. And he has to put up with me, apparently so much against his wishes. . . . Surely he must have told you how much he hates me!

Mitch. I don't think he hates you.

Blanche. He hates me. Or why would he insult me? The first time I laid eyes on him I thought to myself, that man is my executioner! That man will destroy me, unless—

Mitch. Blanche—

Blanche. Yes, honey?

Mitch. Can I ask you a question?

Blanche. Yes. What?

Mitch. How old are you?

[*She makes a nervous gesture*]

Blanche. Why do you want to know?

Mitch. I talked to my mother about you and she said, "How old is Blanche?" And I wasn't able to tell her.

[*There is another pause*]

Blanche. You talked to your mother about me?

Mitch. Yes.

Blanche. Why?

Mitch. I told my mother how nice you were, and I liked you.

Blanche. Were you sincere about that?

Mitch. You know I was.

Blanche. Why did your mother want to know my age?

Mitch. Mother is sick.

Blanche. I'm sorry to hear it. Badly?

Mitch. She won't live long. Maybe just a few months.

Blanche. Oh.

Mitch. She worries because I'm not settled.

Blanche. Oh.

Mitch. She wants me to be settled down before she—

[*His voice is hoarse and he clears his throat twice, shuffling nervously around with his hands in and out of his pockets*]

Blanche. You love her very much, don't you?

Mitch. Yes.

Blanche. I think you have a great capacity for devotion. You will be lonely when she passes on, won't you? [*Mitch clears his throat and nods*] I understand what that is.

Mitch. To be lonely?

Blanche. I loved someone, too, and the person I loved I lost.

Mitch. Dead? [*She crosses to the window and sits on the sill, looking out. She pours herself another drink*] A man?

Blanche. He was a boy, just a boy, when I was a very young girl. When I was

sixteen, I made the discovery—love. All at once and much, much too completely. It was like you suddenly turned a blinding light on something that had always been half in shadow, that's how it struck the world for me. But I was unlucky. Deluded. There was something different about the boy, a nervousness, a softness and tenderness which wasn't like a man's, although he wasn't the least bit effeminate looking—still—that thing was there. . . . He came to me for help. I didn't know that. I didn't find out anything till after our marriage when we'd run away and come back and all I knew was I'd failed him in some mysterious way and wasn't able to give the help he needed but couldn't speak of! He was in the quicksands and clutching at me—but I wasn't holding him out, I was slipping in with him! I didn't know that. I didn't know anything except I loved him unendurably but without being able to help him or help myself. Then I found out. In the worst of all possible ways. By coming suddenly into a room that I thought was empty—which wasn't empty, but had two people in it . . . the boy I had married and an older man who had been his friend for years. . . .

[*A locomotive is heard approaching outside. She claps her hands to her ears and crouches over. The headlight of the locomotive glares into the room as it thunders past. As the noise recedes she straightens slowly and continues speaking*]

Afterwards we pretended that nothing had been discovered. Yes, the three of us drove out to Moon Lake Casino, very drunk and laughing all the way.

[*Polka music sounds, in a minor key faint with distance*]

We danced the Varsouviana! Suddenly in the middle of the dance the boy I had married broke away from me and ran out of the casino. A few moments later—a shot!

[*The Polka stops abruptly*]

[*BLANCHE rises stiffly. Then, the Polka resumes in a major key*]

I ran out—all did!—all ran and gathered about the terrible thing at the edge of the lake! I couldn't get near for the crowding. Then somebody caught my arm. "Don't go any closer! Come back! You don't want to see!" See? See what! Then I heard voices say—Allan! Allan! The Grey boy!

He'd stuck the revolver into his mouth, and fired—so that the back of his head had been—blown away!

[She sways and covers her face]

It was because—on the dance-floor—unable to stop myself—I'd suddenly said—"I saw! I know! You disgust me . . ." And then the searchlight which had been turned on the world was turned off again and never for one moment since has there been any light that's stronger than this—kitchen—candle . . .

[MITCH gets up awkwardly and moves toward her a little. The Polka music increases. MITCH stands beside her]

Mitch [drawing her slowly into his arms]. You need somebody. And I need somebody, too. Could it be—you and me, Blanche?

[She stares at him vacantly for a moment. Then with a soft cry huddles in his embrace. She makes a sobbing effort to speak but the words won't come. He kisses her forehead and her eyes and finally her lips. The Polka tune fades out. Her breath is drawn and released in long, grateful sobs]

Blanche. Sometimes—there's God—so quickly!

SCENE SEVEN

It is late afternoon in mid-September.

The portieres are open and a table is set for a birthday supper, with cake and flowers.

STELLA is completing the decorations as STANLEY comes in.

Stanley. What's all this stuff for?

Stella. Honey, it's Blanche's birthday.

Stanley. She here?

Stella. In the bathroom.

Stanley [mimicking]. "Washing out some things"?

Stella. I reckon so.

Stanley. How long she been in there?

Stella. All afternoon.

Stanley [mimicking]. "Soaking in a hot tub"?

Stella. Yes.

Stanley. Temperature 100 on the nose, and she soaks herself in a hot tub.

Stella. She says it cools her off for the evening.

Stanley. And you run out an' get her

cokes, I suppose? And serve 'em to Her Majesty in the tub? *[STELLA shrugs]* Set down here a minute.

Stella. Stanley, I've got things to do.

Stanley. Set down! I've got th' dope on your big sister, Stella.

Stella. Stanley, stop picking on Blanche.

Stanley. That girl calls me common!

Stella. Lately you been doing all you can think of to rub her the wrong way, Stanley, and Blanche is sensitive and you've got to realize that Blanche and I grew up under very different circumstances than you did.

Stanley. So I been told. And told and told and told! You know she's been feeding us a pack of lies here?

Stella. No, I don't, and—

Stanley. Well, she has, however. But now the cat's out of the bag! I found out some things!

Stella. What—things?

Stanley. Things I already suspected. But now I got proof from the most reliable sources—which I have checked on!

[BLANCHE is singing in the bathroom a saccharine popular ballad which is used contrapuntally with STANLEY's speech]

Stella [to STANLEY]. Lower your voice!

Stanley. Some canary-bird, huh!

Stella. Now please tell me quietly what you think you've found out about my sister.

Stanley. Lie Number One: All this squeamishness she puts on! You should just know the line she's been feeding to Mitch. He thought she had never been more than kissed by a fellow! But Sister Blanche is no lily! Ha-ha! Some lily she is!

Stella. What have you heard and who from?

Stanley. Our supply-man down at the plant has been going through Laurel for years and he knows all about her and everybody else in the town of Laurel knows all about her. She is as famous in Laurel as if she was the President of the United States, only she is not respected by any party! This supply-man stops at a hotel called the Flamingo.

Blanche [singing blithely].

"Say, it's only a paper moon, Sailing over a cardboard sea—

But it wouldn't be make-believe If you believed in me!"

Stella. What about the—Flamingo?

Stanley. She stayed there, too.

Stella. My sister lived at Belle Reve.

Stanley. This is after the home-place had slipped through her lily-white fingers! She moved to the Flamingo! A second-class hotel which has the advantage of not interfering in the private social life of the personalities there! The Flamingo is used to all kinds of goings-on. But even the management of the Flamingo was impressed by Dame Blanche! In fact they was so impressed by Dame Blanche that they requested her to turn in her room-key—for permanently! This happened a couple of weeks before she showed here.

Blanche [singing].

"It's a Barnum and Bailey world, Just as phony as it can be—

But it wouldn't be make-believe If you believed in me!"

Stella. What—contemptible—lies!

Stanley. Sure, I can see how you would be upset by this. She pulled the wool over your eyes as much as Mitch's!

Stella. It's pure invention! There's not a word of truth in it and if I were a man and this creature had dared to invent such things in my presence—

Blanche [singing].

"Without your love,

It's a honky-tonk parade!

Without your love,

It's a melody played In a penny arcade . . ."

Stanley. Honey, I told you I thoroughly checked on these stories! Now wait till I finished. The trouble with Dame Blanche was that she couldn't put on her act any more in Laurel! They got wised up after two or three dates with her and then they quit, and she goes on to another, the same old line, same old act, same old hokey! But the town was too small for this to go on forever! And as time went by she became a town character. Regarded as not just different but downright loco—nuts.

[*STELLA draws back*]

And for the last year or two she has been washed up like poison. That's why she's here this summer, visiting royalty, putting on all this act—because she's practically told by the mayor to get out of town! Yes, did you know there was an army camp near Laurel and your sister's was one of the places called "Out-of-Bounds"?

Blanche.

"It's only a paper moon, Just as phony as it can be—

But it wouldn't be make-believe If you believed in me!"

Stanley. Well, so much for her being such a refined and particular type of girl. Which brings us to Lie Number Two.

Stella. I don't want to hear any more!

Stanley. She's not going back to teach school! In fact I am willing to bet you that she never had no idea of returning to Laurel! She didn't resign temporarily from the high school because of her nerves! No, sree, Bob! She didn't. They kicked her out of that high school before the spring term ended—and I hate to tell you the reason that step was taken! A seventeen-year-old boy—she'd gotten mixed up with!

Blanche.

"It's a Barnum and Bailey world, Just as phony as it can be—"

[*In the bathroom the water goes on loud; little breathless cries and peals of laughter are heard as if a child were frolicking in the tub*]

Stella. This is making me—sick!

Stanley. The boy's dad learned about it and got in touch with the high school superintendent. Boy, oh, boy, I'd like to have been in that office when Dame Blanche was called on the carpet! I'd like to have seen her trying to squirm out of that one! But they had her on the hook good and proper that time and she knew that the jig was all up! They told her she better move on to some fresh territory. Yep, it was practically a town ordinance passed against her!

[*The bathroom door is opened and BLANCHE thrusts her head out, holding a towel about her hair*]

Blanche. Stella!

Stella [faintly]. Yes, Blanche?

Blanche. Give me another bath-towel to dry my hair with. I've just washed it.

Stella. Yes, Blanche.

[*She crosses in a dazed way from the kitchen to the bathroom door with a towel*]

Blanche. What's the matter, honey?

Stella. Matter? Why?

Blanche. You have such a strange expression on your face!

Stella. Oh— [*She tries to laugh*] I guess I'm a little tired!

Blanche. Why don't you bathe, too, soon as I get out?

Stanley [calling from the kitchen]. How soon is that going to be?

Blanche. Not so terribly long! Possess your soul in patience!

Stanley. It's not my soul, it's my kidneys I'm worried about!

[*BLANCHE slams the door. STANLEY laughs harshly. STELLA comes slowly back into the kitchen*]

Stanley. Well, what do you think of it?

Stella. I don't believe all of those stories and I think your supply-man was mean and rotten to tell them. It's possible that some of the things he said are partly true. There are things about my sister I don't approve of—things that caused sorrow at home. She was always—flighty!

Stanley. Flighty!

Stella. But when she was young, very young, she married a boy who wrote poetry. . . . He was extremely good-looking. I think Blanche didn't just love him but worshipped the ground he walked on! Adored him and thought him almost too fine to be human! But then she found out—

Stanley. What?

Stella. This beautiful and talented young man was a degenerate. Didn't your supply-man give you that information?

Stanley. All we discussed was recent history. That must have been a pretty long time ago.

Stella. Yes, it was—a pretty long time ago . . .

[*STANLEY comes up and takes her by the shoulders rather gently. She gently withdraws from him. Automatically she starts sticking little pink candles in the birthday cake*]

Stanley. How many candles you putting in that cake?

Stella. I'll stop at twenty-five.

Stanley. Is company expected?

Stella. We asked Mitch to come over for cake and ice-cream.

[*STANLEY looks a little uncomfortable.*

He lights a cigarette from the one he has just finished]

Stanley. I wouldn't be expecting Mitch over tonight.

[*STELLA pauses in her occupation with candles and looks slowly around at STANLEY*]

Stella. Why?

Stanley. Mitch is a buddy of mine. We

were in the same outfit together—Two-forty-first Engineers. We work in the same plant and now on the same bowling team. You think I could face him if—

Stella. Stanley Kowalski, did you—did you repeat what that—?

Stanley. You're goddam right I told him! I'd have that on my conscience the rest of my life if I knew all that stuff and let my best friend get caught!

Stella. Is Mitch through with her?

Stanley. Wouldn't you be if—?

Stella. I said, *Is Mitch through with her?*

[*BLANCHE'S voice is lifted again, serenely as a bell. She sings "But it wouldn't be make-believe if you believed in me"*]

Stanley. No, I don't think he's necessarily through with her—just wised up!

Stella. Stanley, she thought Mitch was—going to—going to marry her. I was hoping so, too.

Stanley. Well, he's not going to marry her. Maybe he was, but he's not going to jump in a tank with a school of sharks—now! [*He rises*] Blanche! Oh, Blanche! Can I please get in my bathroom?

[*There is a pause*]

Blanche. Yes, indeed, sir! Can you wait one second while I dry?

Stanley. Having waited one hour I guess one second ought to pass in a hurry.

Stella. And she hasn't got her job? Well, what will she do!

Stanley. She's not stayin' here after Tuesday. You know that, don't you? Just to make sure I bought her ticket myself. A bus-ticket!

Stella. In the first place, Blanche wouldn't go on a bus.

Stanley. She'll go on a bus and like it.

Stella. No, she won't, no, she won't, Stanley!

Stanley. *She'll go!* Period. P.S. *She'll go Tuesday!*

Stella [slowly]. What'll—she—do? What on earth will she—do!

Stanley. Her future is mapped out for her.

Stella. What do you mean?

[*BLANCHE sings*]

Stanley. Hey, canary bird! Toots! Get OUT of the BATHROOM!

[*The bathroom door flies open and BLANCHE emerges with a gay peal of laughter, but as STANLEY crosses past*

her, a frightened look appears on her face, almost a look of panic. He doesn't look at her but slams the bathroom door shut as he goes in]

Blanche [snatching up a hair-brush]. Oh, I feel so good after my long, hot bath, I feel so good and cool and—rested!

Stella [sadly and doubtfully from the kitchen]. Do you, Blanche?

Blanche [brushing her hair vigorously]. Yes, I do, so refreshed! [She tinkles her highball glass] A hot bath and a long, cold drink always give me a brand new outlook on life! [She looks through the portieres at STELLA, standing between them, and slowly stops brushing] Something has happened!—What is it?

Stella [turning away quickly]. Why, nothing has happened, Blanche.

Blanche. You're lying! Something has! [She stares fearfully at STELLA, who pretends to be busy at the table. The distant piano goes into a hectic breakdown]

SCENE EIGHT

Three-quarters of an hour later.

The view through the big windows is fading gradually into a still-golden dusk. A torch of sunlight blazes on the side of a big water-tank or oil-drum across the empty lot toward the business district which is now pierced by pin-points of lighted windows or windows reflecting the sunset.

The three people are completing a dismal birthday supper. STANLEY looks sullen. STELLA is embarrassed and sad.

BLANCHE has a tight, artificial smile on her drawn face. There is a fourth place at the table which is left vacant.

Blanche [suddenly]. Stanley, tell us a joke, tell us a funny story to make us all laugh. I don't know what's the matter, we're all so solemn. Is it because I've been stood up by my beau?

[STELLA laughs feebly]

It's the first time in my entire experience with men, and I've had a good deal of all sorts, that I've actually been stood up by anybody! Ha-ha! I don't know how to take it. . . . Tell us a funny little story, Stanley! Something to help us out.

Stanley. I didn't think you liked my stories, Blanche.

Blanche. I like them when they're amusing but not indecent.

Stanley. I don't know any refined enough for your taste.

Blanche. Then let me tell one.

Stella. Yes, you tell one, Blanche. You used to know lots of good stories.

[The music fades]

Blanche. Let me see, now. . . . I must run through my repertoire! Oh, yes—I love parrot stories! Do you all like parrot stories? Well, this one's about the old maid and the parrot. This old maid, she had a parrot that cursed a blue streak and knew more vulgar expressions than Mr. Kowalski!

Stanley. Huh.

Blanche. And the only way to hush the parrot up was to put the cover back on its cage so it would think it was night and go back to sleep. Well, one morning the old maid had just uncovered the parrot for the day—when who should she see coming up the front walk but the preacher! Well, she rushed back to the parrot and slipped the cover back on the cage and then she let in the preacher. And the parrot was perfectly still, just as quiet as a mouse, but just as she was asking the preacher how much sugar he wanted in his coffee—the parrot broke the silence with a loud—[She whistles]—and said—"God damn, but that was a short day!"

[She throws back her head and laughs.

STELLA also makes an ineffectual effort to seem amused. STANLEY pays no attention to the story but reaches way over the table to spear his fork into the remaining chop which he eats with his fingers]

Blanche. Apparently Mr. Kowalski was not amused.

Stella. Mr. Kowalski is too busy making a pig of himself to think of anything else!

Stanley. That's right, baby.

Stella. Your face and your fingers are disgustingly greasy. Go and wash up and then help me clear the table.

[He hurls a plate to the floor]

Stanley. That's how I'll clear the table! [He seizes her arm] Don't ever talk that way to me! "Pig—Polack—disgusting—vulgar—greasy!"—them kind of words have been on your tongue and your sister's too much around here! What do you two think you are? A pair of queens? Remember what Huey Long said—"Every Man is a

King!" And I am the king around here, so don't forget it! [*He hurls a cup and saucer to the floor*] My place is cleared! You want me to clear your places?

[*STELLA begins to cry weakly. STANLEY stalks out on the porch and lights a cigarette*]

[*The Negro entertainers around the corner are heard*]

Blanche. What happened while I was basking? What did he tell you, Stella?

Stella. Nothing, nothing, nothing!

Blanche. I think he told you something about Mitch and me! You know why Mitch didn't come but you won't tell me! [*Stella shakes her head helplessly*] I'm going to call him!

Stella. I wouldn't call him, Blanche.

Blanche. I am, I'm going to call him on the phone.

Stella [*miserably*]. I wish you wouldn't.

Blanche. I intend to be given some explanation from someone!

[*She rushes to the phone in the bedroom. STELLA goes out on the porch and stares reproachfully at her husband. He grunts and turns away from her*]

Stella. I hope you're pleased with your doings. I never had so much trouble swallowing food in my life, looking at that girl's face and the empty chair!

[*She cries quietly*]

Blanche [*at the phone*]. Hello. Mr. Mitchell, please. . . . Oh. . . . I would like to leave a number if I may. Magnolia 9047. And say it's important to call. . . . Yes, very important. . . . Thank you.

[*She remains by the phone with a lost, frightened look*]

[*STANLEY turns slowly back toward his wife and takes her clumsily in his arms*]

Stanley. Stell, it's gonna be all right after she goes and after you've had the baby. It's gonna be all right again between you and me the way that it was. You remember that way that it was? Them nights we had together? God, honey, it's gonna be sweet when we can make noise in the night the way that we used to and get the colored lights going with nobody's sister behind the curtains to hear us!

[*Their upstairs neighbors are heard in bellowing laughter at something. STANLEY chuckles*]

Steve an' Eunice. . . .

Stella. Come back in. [*She returns to the kitchen and starts lighting the candles on the white cake*] Blanche?

Blanche. Yes. [*She returns from the bedroom to the table in the kitchen*] Oh, those pretty, pretty little candles! Oh, don't burn them, Stella.

Stella. I certainly will.

[*STANLEY comes back in*]

Blanche. You ought to save them for baby's birthdays. Oh, I hope candles are going to glow in his life and I hope that his eyes are going to be like candles, like two blue candles lighted in a white cake!

Stanley [*sitting down*]. What poetry!

Blanche [*she pauses reflectively for a moment*]. I shouldn't have called him.

Stella. There's lots of things could have happened.

Blanche. There's no excuse for it, Stella. I don't have to put up with insults. I won't be taken for granted.

Stanley. Goddamn, it's hot in here with the steam from the bathroom.

Blanche. I've said I was sorry three times. [*The piano fades out*] I take hot baths for my nerves. Hydro-therapy, they call it. You healthy Polack, without a nerve in your body, of course you don't know what anxiety feels like!

Stanley. I am not a Polack. People from Poland are Poles, not Polacks. But what I am is a one hundred per cent American, born and raised in the greatest country on earth and proud as hell of it, so don't ever call me a Polack.

[*The phone rings. BLANCHE rises expectantly*]

Blanche. Oh, that's for me, I'm sure.

Stanley. I'm not sure. Keep your seat. [*He crosses leisurely to phone*] H'lo. Aw, yeh, hello, Mac.

[*He leans against wall, staring insultingly at BLANCHE. She sinks back in her chair with a frightened look. STELLA leans over and touches her shoulder*]

Blanche. Oh, keep your hands off me, Stella. What is the matter with you? Why do you look at me with that pitying look?

Stanley [*bawling*]. QUIET IN THERE! —We've got a noisy woman on the place.—Go on, Mac. At Riley's? No, I don't wanta bowl at Riley's. I had a little trouble with Riley last week. I'm the team-captain,

ain't I? All right, then, we're not gonna bowl at Riley's, we're gonna bowl at the West Side or the Gala! All right, Mac. See you!

[*He hangs up and returns to the table.*

BLANCHE *fiercely controls herself, drinking quickly from her tumbler of water. He doesn't look at her but reaches in a pocket. Then he speaks slowly and with false amiability*

Sister Blanche, I've got a little birthday remembrance for you.

Blanche. Oh, have you, Stanley? I wasn't expecting any, I—I don't know why Stella wants to observe my birthday! I'd much rather forget it—when you—reach twenty-seven! Well—age is a subject that you'd prefer to—ignore!

Stanley. Twenty-seven?

Blanche [*quickly*]. What is it? Is it for me?

[*He is holding a little envelope toward her*]

Stanley. Yes, I hope you like it!

Blanche. Why, why—Why, it's a—

Stanley. Ticket! Back to Laurel! On the Greyhound! Tuesday!

[*The Varsouviana music steals in softly and continues playing. STELLA rises abruptly and turns her back.*

BLANCHE *tries to smile. Then she tries to laugh. Then she gives both up and springs from the table and runs into the next room. She clutches her throat and then runs into the bathroom. Coughing, gagging sounds are heard*]

Well!

Stella. You didn't need to do that.

Stanley. Don't forget all that I took off her.

Stella. You needn't have been so cruel to someone alone as she is.

Stanley. Delicate piece she is.

Stella. She is. She was. You didn't know Blanche as a girl. Nobody, nobody, was tender and trusting as she was. But people like you abused her, and forced her to change.

[*He crosses into the bedroom, ripping off his shirt, and changes into a brilliant silk bowling shirt. She follows him*]

Do you think you're going bowling now?

Stanley. Sure.

Stella. You're not going bowling. [*She*

catches hold of his shirt] Why did you do this to her?

Stanley. I done nothing to no one. Let go of my shirt. You've torn it.

Stella. I want to know why. Tell me why.

Stanley. When we first met, me and you, you thought I was common. How right you was, baby. I was common as dirt. You showed me the snapshot of the place with the columns. I pulled you down off them columns and how you loved it, having them colored lights going! And wasn't we happy together, wasn't it all okay till she showed here?

[*STELLA makes a slight movement. Her look goes suddenly inward as if some interior voice had called her name. She begins a slow, shuffling progress from the bedroom to the kitchen, leaning and resting on the back of the chair and then on the edge of a table with a blind look and listening expression. STANLEY, finishing with his shirt, is unaware of her reaction*]

And wasn't we happy together? Wasn't it all okay? Till she showed here. Hoity-toity, describing me as an ape. [*He suddenly notices the change in STELLA*] Hey, what is it, Stell?

[*He crosses to her*]

Stella [*quietly*]. Take me to the hospital.

[*He is with her now, supporting her with his arm, murmuring indistinguishably as they go outside*]

SCENE NINE

A while later that evening. BLANCHE is seated in a tense hunched position in a bedroom chair that she has re-covered with diagonal green and white stripes. She has on her scarlet satin robe. On the table beside chair is a bottle of liquor and a glass. The rapid, feverish polka tune, the "Varsouviana," is heard. The music is in her mind; she is drinking to escape it and the sense of disaster closing in on her, and she seems to whisper the words of the song. An electric fan is turning back and forth across her.

MITCH comes around the corner in work clothes: blue denim shirt and pants. He is unshaven. He climbs the steps to the door and rings. BLANCHE is startled.

Blanche. Who is it, please?

Mitch [*hoarsely*]. Me. Mitch.

[The polka tune stops]

Blanche. Mitch:—Just a minute.

[She rushes about frantically, hiding the bottle in a closet, crouching at the mirror and dabbing her face with cologne and powder. She is so excited that her breath is audible as she dashes about. At last she rushes to the door in the kitchen and lets him in]

Mitch!— Y'know, I really shouldn't let you in after the treatment I have received from you this evening! So utterly uncavalier! But hello, beautiful!

[She offers him her lips. He ignores it and pushes past her into the flat. She looks fearfully after him as he stalks into the bedroom]

My, my, what a cold shoulder! And such uncouth apparel! Why, you haven't even shaved! The unforgivable insult to a lady! But I forgive you. I forgive you because it's such a relief to see you. You've stopped that polka tune that I had caught in my head. Have you ever had anything caught in your head? No, of course you haven't, you dumb angel-puss, you'd never get anything awful caught in your head!

[He stares at her while she follows him while she talks. It is obvious that he has had a few drinks on the way over]

Mitch. Do we have to have that fan on?

Blanche. No!

Mitch. I don't like fans.

Blanche. Then let's turn it off, honey. I'm not partial to them!

[She presses the switch and the fan nods slowly off. She clears her throat uneasily as MITCH plumps himself down on the bed in the bedroom and lights a cigarette]

I don't know what there is to drink. I—haven't investigated.

Mitch. I don't want Stan's liquor.

Blanche. It isn't Stan's. Everything here isn't Stan's. Some things on the premises are actually mine! How is your mother? Isn't your mother well?

Mitch. Why?

Blanche. Something's the matter tonight, but never mind. I won't cross-examine the witness. I'll just— [She touches her forehead vaguely. The polka tune starts up again]—pretend I don't notice anything different about you! That—music again . . .

Mitch. What music?

Blanche. The "Varsouviana"! The polka tune they were playing when Allan— Wait!

[A distant revolver shot is heard.

BLANCHE seems relieved]

There now, the shot! It always stops after that. [The polka music dies out again] Yes, now it's stopped.

Mitch. Are you boxed out of your mind?

Blanche. I'll go and see what I can find in the way of—[She crosses into the closet, pretending to search for the bottle] Oh, by the way, excuse me for not being dressed. But I'd practically given you up! Had you forgotten your invitation to supper?

Mitch. I wasn't going to see you any more.

Blanche. Wait a minute. I can't hear what you're saying and you talk so little that when you do say something, I don't want to miss a single syllable of it. . . . What am I looking around here for? Oh, yes—liquor! We've had so much excitement around here this evening that I am boxed out of my mind! [She pretends suddenly to find the bottle. He draws his foot up on the bed and stares at her contemptuously] Here's something. Southern Comfort! What is that, I wonder?

Mitch. If you don't know, it must belong to Stan.

Blanche. Take your foot off the bed. It has a light cover on it. Of course you boys don't notice things like that. I've done so much with this place since I've been here.

Mitch. I bet you have.

Blanche. You saw it before I came. Well, look at it now! This room is almost—dainty! I want to keep it that way. I wonder if this stuff ought to be mixed with something? Ummm, it's sweet, so sweet! It's terribly, terribly sweet! Why, it's a liqueur, I believe! Yes, that's what it is, a liqueur! [Mitch grunts] I'm afraid you won't like it, but try it, and maybe you will.

Mitch. I told you already I don't want none of his liquor and I mean it. You ought to lay off his liquor. He says you been lapping it up all summer like a wild-cat!

Blanche. What a fantastic statement! Fantastic of him to say it, fantastic of you to repeat it! I won't descend to the level of such cheap accusations to answer them, even!

Mitch. Huh.

Blanche. What's in your mind? I see something in your eyes!

Mitch [*getting up*]. It's dark in here.

Blanche. I like it dark. The dark is comforting to me.

Mitch. I don't think I ever seen you in the light. [*BLANCHE laughs breathlessly*] That's a fact!

Blanche. Is it?

Mitch. I've never seen you in the afternoon.

Blanche. Whose fault is that?

Mitch. You never want to go out in the afternoon.

Blanche. Why, Mitch, you're at the plant in the afternoon!

Mitch. Not Sunday afternoon. I've asked you to go out with me sometimes on Sundays but you always make an excuse. You never want to go out till after six and then it's always some place that's not lighted much.

Blanche. There is some obscure meaning in this but I fail to catch it.

Mitch. What it means is I've never had a real good look at you, Blanche. Let's turn the light on here.

Blanche [*fearfully*]. Light? Which light? What for?

Mitch. This one with the paper thing on it.

[*He tears the paper lantern off the light bulb. She utters a frightened gasp*]

Blanche. What did you do that for?

Mitch. So I can take a look at you good and plain!

Blanche. Of course you don't really mean to be insulting!

Mitch. No, just realistic.

Blanche. I don't want realism. I want magic! [*MITCH laughs*] Yes, yes, magic! I try to give that to people. I misrepresent things to them. I don't tell truth, I tell what *ought* to be truth. And if that is sinful, then let me be damned for it!—*Don't turn the light on!*

[*MITCH crosses to the switch. He turns the light on and stares at her. She cries out and covers her face. He turns the light off again*]

Mitch [*slowly and bitterly*]. I don't mind you being older than what I thought. But all the rest of it—Christ! That pitch about your ideals being so old-fashioned and all the malarkey that you've dished out all summer. Oh, I knew you weren't sixteen

any more. But I was a fool enough to believe you was straight.

Blanche. Who told you I wasn't—'straight'? My loving brother-in-law. And you believed him.

Mitch. I called him a liar at first. And then I checked on the story. First I asked our supply-man who travels through Laurel. And then I talked directly over long-distance to this merchant.

Blanche. Who is this merchant?

Mitch. Kiefaber.

Blanche. The merchant Kiefaber of Laurel! I know the man. He whistled at me. I put him in his place. So now for revenge he makes up stories about me.

Mitch. Three people, Kiefaber, Stanley and Shaw, swore to them!

Blanche. Rub-a-dub-dub, three men in a tub! And such a filthy tub!

Mitch. Didn't you stay at a hotel called Flamingo?

Blanche. Flamingo? No! Tarantula was the name of it! I stayed at a hotel called The Tarantula Arms!

Mitch [*stupidly*]. Tarantula?

Blanche. Yes, a big spider! That's where I brought my victims. [*She pours herself another drink*] Yes, I had many intimacies with strangers. After the death of Allan—intimacies with strangers was all I seemed able to fill my empty heart with. . . . I think it was panic, just panic, that drove me from one to another, hunting for some protection—here and there, in the most—unlikely places—even, at last, in a seventeen-year-old boy but—somebody wrote the superintendent about it—"This woman is morally unfit for her position!"

[*She throws back her head with convulsive, sobbing laughter. Then she repeats the statement, gasps, and drinks*]

True? Yes, I suppose—unfit somehow—anyway. . . . So I came here. There was nowhere else I could go. I was played out. You know what played out is? My youth was suddenly gone up the water-spout, and—I met you. You said you needed somebody. Well, I needed somebody, too. I thanked God for you, because you seemed to be gentle—a cleft in the rock of the world that I could hide in! But I guess I was asking, hoping—too much! Kiefaber, Stanley and Shaw have tied an old tin can to the tail of the kite.

[*There is a pause. MITCH stares at her dumbly*]

Mitch. You lied to me, Blanche.

Blanche. Don't say I lied to you.

Mitch. Lies, lies, inside and out, all lies.

Blanche. Never inside, I didn't lie in my heart . . .

[*A Vendor comes around the corner. She is a blind Mexican woman in a dark shawl, carrying bunches of those gaudy tin flowers that lower class Mexicans display at funerals and other festive occasions. She is calling barely audibly. Her figure is only faintly visible outside the building*]

Mexican Woman. Flores. Flores. Flores para los muertos. Flores. Flores.

Blanche. What? Oh! Somebody outside . . .

[*She goes to the door, opens it and stares at the MEXICAN WOMAN*]

Mexican Woman [*she is at the door and offers BLANCHE some of her flowers*]. Flores? Flores para los muertos?

Blanche [*frightened*]. No, no! Not now! Not now!

[*She darts back into the apartment, slamming the door*]

Mexican Woman [*she turns away and starts to move down the street*]. Flores para los muertos.

[*The polka tune fades in*]

Blanche [*as if to herself*]. Crumble and fade and—regrets—recreminations . . . 'If you'd done this, it wouldn't've cost me that!'

Mexican Woman. Coronas para los muertos. Coronas . . .

Blanche. Legacies! Huh . . . And other things such as bloodstained pillow-slips—'Her linen needs changing'—'Yes Mother. But couldn't we get a colored girl to do it?' No, we couldn't of course. Everything gone but the—

Mexican Woman. Flores.

Blanche. Death—I used to sit here and she used to sit over there and death was as close as you are. . . . We didn't dare even admit we had ever heard of it!

Mexican woman. Flores para los muertos, flores—flores . . .

Blanche. The opposite is desire. So do you wonder? How could you possibly wonder! Not far from Belle Reve, before we had lost Belle Reve, was a camp where they

trained young soldiers. On Saturday nights they would go in town to get drunk—

Mexican Woman [*softly*]. Coronas . . .

Blanche. —and on the way back they would stagger onto my lawn and call—'Blanche! Blanche!'—The deaf old lady remaining suspected nothing. But sometimes I slipped outside to answer their calls. . . . Later the paddy-wagon would gather them up like daisies . . . the long way home . . .

[*The MEXICAN WOMAN turns slowly and drifts back off with her soft mournful cries. BLANCHE goes to the dresser and leans forward on it. After a moment, MITCH rises and follows her purposefully. The polka music fades away. He places his hands on her waist and tries to turn her about*]

Blanche. What do you want?

Mitch [*fumbling to embrace her*]. What I been missing all summer.

Blanche. Then marry me, Mitch!

Mitch. I don't think I want to marry you any more.

Blanche. No?

Mitch [*dropping his hands from her waist*]. You're not clean enough to bring in the house with my mother.

Blanche. Go away, then. [*He stares at her*] Get out of here quick before I start screaming fire! [*Her throat is tightening with hysteria*] Get out of here quick before I start screaming fire.

[*He still remains staring. She suddenly rushes to the big window with its pale blue square of the soft summer light and cries wildly*]

Fire! Fire! Fire!

[*With a startled gasp, MITCH turns and goes out the outer door, clatters awkwardly down the steps and around the corner of the building. BLANCHE staggers back from the window and falls to her knees. The distant piano is slow and blue*]

SCENE TEN

It is a few hours later that night.

BLANCHE has been drinking fairly steadily since MITCH left.

She has dragged her wardrobe trunk into the center of the bedroom. It hangs open with flowery dresses thrown across it. As the drinking and packing went on, a mood

of hysterical exhilaration came into her and she has decked herself out in a somewhat soiled and crumpled white satin evening gown and a pair of scuffed silver slippers with brilliants set in their heels.

Now she is placing the rhinestone tiara on her head before the mirror of the dressing-table and murmuring excitedly as if to a group of spectral admirers.

Blanche. How about taking a swim, a moonlight swim at the old rock-quarry? If anyone's sober enough to drive a car! Ha-ha! Best way in the world to stop your head buzzing! Only you've got to be careful to dive where the deep pool is—if you hit a rock you don't come up till tomorrow . . .

[Tremblingly she lifts the hand mirror for a closer inspection. She catches her breath and slams the mirror face down with such violence that the glass cracks. She moans a little and attempts to rise]

[STANLEY appears around the corner of the building. He still has on the vivid green silk bowling shirt. As he rounds the corner the honky-tonk music is heard. It continues softly throughout the scene]

[He enters the kitchen, slamming the door. As he peers in at BLANCHE, he gives a low whistle. He has had a few drinks on the way and has brought some quart beer bottles home with him]

Blanche. How is my sister?

Stanley. She is doing okay.

Blanche. And how is the baby?

Stanley [grinning amiably]. The baby won't come before morning so they told me to go home and get a little shut-eye.

Blanche. Does that mean we are to be alone in here?

Stanley. Yep. Just me and you, Blanche. Unless you got somebody hid under the bed. What've you got on those fine feathers for?

Blanche. Oh, that's right. You left before my wire came.

Stanley. You got a wire?

Blanche. I received a telegram from an old admirer of mine.

Stanley. Anything good?

Blanche. I think so. An invitation.

Stanley. What to? A fireman's ball?

Blanche [throwing back her head]. A cruise of the Caribbean on a yacht!

Stanley. Well, well. What do you know?

Blanche. I have never been so surprised in my life.

Stanley. I guess not.

Blanche. It came like a bolt from the blue!

Stanley. Who did you say it was from?

Blanche. An old beau of mine.

Stanley. The one that give you the white fox-pieces?

Blanche. Mr. Shep Huntleigh. I wore his ATO pin my last year at college. I hadn't seen him again until last Christmas. I ran into him on Biscayne Boulevard. Then—just now—this wire—inviting me on a cruise of the Caribbean! The problem is clothes. I tore into my trunk to see what I have that's suitable for the tropics!

Stanley. And come up with that—gorgeous—diamond—tiara?

Blanche. This old relic? Ha-ha! It's only rhinestones.

Stanley. Gosh. I thought it was Tiffany diamonds.

[He unbuttons his shirt]

Blanche. Well, anyhow, I shall be entertained in style.

Stanley. Uh-huh. It goes to show, you never know what is coming.

Blanche. Just when I thought my luck had begun to fail me—

Stanley. Into the picture pops this Miami millionaire.

Blanche. This man is not from Miami. This man is from Dallas.

Stanley. This man is from Dallas?

Blanche. Yes, this man is from Dallas where gold spouts out of the ground!

Stanley. Well, just so he's from somewhere!

[He starts removing his shirt]

Blanche. Close the curtains before you undress any further.

Stanley [amiably]. This is all I'm going to undress right now. [He rips the sack off a quart beer-bottle] Seen a bottle-opener?

[She moves slowly toward the dresser, where she stands with her hands knotted together]

I used to have a cousin who could open a beer-bottle with his teeth. [Pounding the bottle cap on the corner of table] That was his only accomplishment, all he could do—he was just a human bottle-opener. And

then one time, at a wedding party, he broke his front teeth off! After that he was so ashamed of himself he used t' sneak out of the house when company came . . .

[The bottle cap pops off and a geyser of foam shoots up. Stanley laughs happily, holding up the bottle over his head]

Ha-ha! Rain from heaven! *[He extends the bottle toward her]* Shall we bury the hatchet and make it a loving-cup? Huh?

Blanche. No, thank you.

Stanley. Well, it's a red letter night for us both. You having an oil-millionaire and me having a baby.

[He goes to the bureau in the bedroom and crouches to remove something from the bottom drawer]

Blanche *[drawing back]*. What are you doing in here?

Stanley. Here's something I always break out on special occasions like this. The silk pyjamas I wore on my wedding night!

Blanche. Oh.

Stanley. When the telephone rings and they say, "You've got a son!" I'll tear this off and wave it like a flag! *[He shakes out a brilliant pyjama coat]* I guess we are both entitled to put on the dog.

[He goes back to the kitchen with the coat over his arm]

Blanche. When I think of how divine it is going to be to have such a thing as privacy once more—I could weep with joy!

Stanley. This millionaire from Dallas is not going to interfere with your privacy any?

Blanche. It won't be the sort of thing you have in mind. This man is a gentleman and he respects me. *[Improvising feverishly]* What he wants is my companionship. Having great wealth sometimes makes people lonely! A cultivated woman, a woman of intelligence and breeding, can enrich a man's life—immeasurably! I have those things to offer, and this doesn't take them away. Physical beauty is passing. A transitory possession. But beauty of the mind and richness of the spirit and tenderness of the heart—and I have all of those things—aren't taken away, but grow! Increase with the years! How strange that I should be called a destitute woman! When I have all of these treasures locked in my heart. *[A choked sob comes from her]* I think of myself as a very, very rich woman! But I have

been foolish—casting my pearls before swine!

Stanley. Swine, huh?

Blanche. Yes, swine! Swine! And I'm thinking not only of you but of your friend, Mr. Mitchell. He came to see me tonight. He dared to come here in his work-clothes! And to repeat slander to me, vicious stories that he had gotten from you! I gave him his walking papers . . .

Stanley. You did, huh?

Blanche. But then he came back. He returned with a box of roses to beg my forgiveness! He implored my forgiveness. But some things are not forgivable. Deliberate cruelty is not forgivable. It is the one unforgivable thing in my opinion and it is the one thing of which I have never, never been guilty. And so I told him, I said to him, "Thank you," but it was foolish of me to think that we could even adapt ourselves to each other. Our ways of life are too different. Our attitudes and our backgrounds are incompatible. We have to be realistic about such things. So farewell, my friend! And let there be no hard feelings . . .

Stanley. Was this before or after the telegram came from the Texas oil millionaire?

Blanche. What telegram? No! No, after! As a matter of fact, the wire came just as—

Stanley. As a matter of fact there wasn't no wire at all!

Blanche. Oh, oh!

Stanley. There isn't no millionaire! And Mitch didn't come back with roses 'cause I know where he is—

Blanche. Oh!

Stanley. There isn't a goddam thing but imagination!

Blanche. Oh!

Stanley. And lies and conceit and tricks!

Blanche. Oh!

Stanley. And look at yourself! Take a look at yourself in that wornout Mardi Gras outfit, rented for fifty cents from some rag-picker! And with the crazy crown on! What queen do you think you are?

Blanche. Oh—God . . .

Stanley. I've been on to you from the start! Not once did you pull any wool over this boy's eyes! You come in here and sprinkle the place with powder and spray perfume and cover the light-bulb with a

paper lantern, and lo and behold the place has turned into Egypt and you are the Queen of the Nile! Sitting on your throne and swilling down my liquor! I say—*Ha! —Ha!* Do you hear me? *Ha—ha—ha!*

[*He walks into the bedroom*]

Blanche. Don't come in here!

[*Lurid reflections appear on the walls around BLANCHE. The shadows are of a grotesque and menacing form. She catches her breath, crosses to the phone and jiggles the hook. STANLEY goes into the bathroom and closes the door*]

Operator, operator! Give me long-distance, please. . . . I want to get in touch with Mr. Shep Huntleigh of Dallas. He's so well-known he doesn't require any address. Just ask anybody who— Wait!!—No, I couldn't find it right now. . . . Please understand, I—No! No, wait! . . . One moment! Someone is— Nothing! Hold on, please!

[*She sets the phone down and crosses warily into the kitchen. The night is filled with inhuman voices like cries in a jungle*]

[*The shadows and lurid reflections move sinuously as flames along the wall spaces*]

[*Through the back wall of the rooms, which have become transparent, can be seen the sidewalk. A prostitute has rolled a drunkard. He pursues her along the walk, overtakes her and there is a struggle. A policeman's whistle breaks it up. The figures disappear*]

[*Some moments later the Negro Woman appears around the corner with a sequined bag which the prostitute had dropped on the walk. She is rooting excitedly through it*]

[*BLANCHE presses her knuckles to her lips and returns slowly to the phone. She speaks in a hoarse whisper*]

Blanche. Operator! Operator! Never mind long-distance. Get Western Union. There isn't time to be— Western—Western Union!

[*She waits anxiously*]

Western Union? Yes! I—want to— Take down this message! "In desperate, desperate circumstances! Help me! Caught in a trap. Caught in—" *Oh!*

[*The bathroom door is thrown open and STANLEY comes out in the brilliant*

silk pyjamas. He grins at her as he knots the tasseled sash about his waist. She gasps and backs away from the phone. He stares at her for a count of ten. Then a clicking becomes audible from the telephone, steady and rasping]

Stanley. You left th' phone off th' hook.

[*He crosses to it deliberately and sets it back on the hook. After he has replaced it, he stares at her again, his mouth slowly curving into a grin, as he weaves between BLANCHE and the outer door*]

[*The barely audible "blue piano" begins to drum up louder. The sound of it turns into the roar of an approaching locomotive. BLANCHE crouches, pressing her fists to her ears until it has gone by*]

Blanche [*finally straightening*]. Let me— let me get by you!

Stanley. Get by me? Sure. Go ahead.

[*He moves back a pace in the doorway*]
Blanche. You—you stand over there!

[*She indicates a further position*]

Stanley [*grinning*]. You got plenty of room to walk by me now.

Blanche. Not with you there! But I've got to get out somehow!

Stanley. You think I'll interfere with you? Ha-ha!

[*The "blue piano" goes softly. She turns confusedly and makes a faint gesture. The inhuman jungle voices rise up. He takes a step toward her, biting his tongue which protrudes between his lips*]

Stanley [*softly*]. Come to think of it— maybe you wouldn't be bad to—interfere with . . .

[*BLANCHE moves backward through the door into the bedroom*]

Blanche. Stay back! Don't you come toward me another step or I'll—

Stanley. What?

Blanche. Some awful thing will happen! It will!

Stanley. What are you putting on now?

[*They are now both inside the bedroom*]

Blanche. I warn you, don't, I'm in danger!

[*He takes another step. She smashes a bottle on the table and faces him, clutching the broken top*]

Stanley. What did you do that for?

Blanche. So I could twist the broken end in your face!

Stanley. I bet you would do that!

Blanche. I would! I will if you—

Stanley. Oh! So you want some rough-house! All right, let's have some rough-house!

[He springs toward her, overturning the table. She cries out and strikes at him with the bottle top but he catches her wrist]

Tiger—tiger! Drop the bottle-top! Drop it! We've had this date with each other from the beginning!

[She moans. The bottle-top falls. She sinks to her knees. He picks up her inert figure and carries her to the bed. The hot trumpet and drums from the Four Deuces sound loudly]

SCENE ELEVEN

It is some weeks later. STELLA is packing BLANCHE's things. Sound of water can be heard running in the bathroom.

The portieres are partly open on the poker players—STANLEY, STEVE, MITCH and PABLO—who sit around the table in the kitchen. The atmosphere of the kitchen is now the same raw, lurid one of the disastrous poker night.

The building is framed by the sky of turquoise. STELLA has been crying as she arranges the flowery dresses in the open trunk.

EUNICE comes down the steps from her flat above and enters the kitchen. There is an outburst from the poker table.

Stanley. Drew to an inside straight and made it, by God.

Pablo. *Maldita sea tu suerte!*

Stanley. Put it in English, greaseball.

Pablo. I am cursing your rutting luck.

Stanley [*prodigiously elated*]. You know what luck is? Luck is believing you're lucky. Take at Salerno. I believed I was lucky. I figured that 4 out of 5 would not come through but I would . . . and I did. I put that down as a rule. To hold front position in this rat-race you've got to believe you are lucky.

Mitch. You . . . you . . . you . . . Brag. . . brag . . . bull . . . bull.

[STELLA goes into the bedroom and starts folding a dress]

Stanley. What's the matter with him?

Eunice [*walking past the table*]. I always did say that men are callous things with no feelings, but this does beat anything. Making pigs of yourselves.

[She comes through the portieres into the bedroom]

Stanley. What's the matter with her?

Stella. How is my baby?

Eunice. Sleeping like a little angel. Brought you some grapes. *[She puts them on a stool and lowers her voice]*. *Blanche?*

Stella. Bathing.

Eunice. How is she?

Stella. She wouldn't eat anything but asked for a drink.

Eunice. What did you tell her?

Stella. I—just told her that—we'd made arrangements for her to rest in the country. She's got it mixed in her mind with Shep Huntleigh.

[BLANCHE opens the bathroom door slightly]

Blanche. Stella.

Stella. Yes, *Blanche?*

Blanche. If anyone calls while I'm bathing take the number and tell them I'll call right back.

Stella. Yes.

Blanche. That cool yellow silk—the bouclé. See if it's crushed. If it's not too crushed I'll wear it and on the lapel that silver and turquoise pin in the shape of a seahorse. You will find them in the heart-shaped box I keep my accessories in. And *Stella* . . . Try and locate a bunch of artificial violets in that box, too, to pin with the seahorse on the lapel of the jacket.

[She closes the door. STELLA turns to EUNICE]

Stella. I don't know if I did the right thing.

Eunice. What else could you do?

Stella. I couldn't believe her story and go on living with Stanley.

Eunice. Don't ever believe it. Life has got to go on. No matter what happens, you've got to keep on going.

[The bathroom door opens a little]

Blanche [*looking out*]. Is the coast clear?

Stella. Yes, *Blanche*. [*To EUNICE*] Tell her how well she's looking.

Blanche. Please close the curtains before I come out.

Stella. They're closed.

Stanley. —How many for you?

Happy. Sure, Pop, sure!

Biff [driven]. Well, it was kind of—

Willy. I was wondering if he'd remember you. [*To HAPPY*] Imagine, man doesn't see him for ten, twelve years and gives him that kind of a welcome!

Happy. Damn right!

Biff [trying to return to the offensive].
Pop, look—

Willy. You know why he remembered you, don't you? Because you impressed him in those days.

Biff. Let's talk quietly and get this down to the facts, huh?

Willy [as though BIFF had been interrupting]. Well, what happened? It's great news, Biff. Did he take you into his office or'd you talk in the waiting-room?

Biff. Well, he came in, see, and—

Willy [with a big smile]. What'd he say? Betcha he threw his arm around you.

Biff. Well, he kinda—

Willy. He's a fine man. [*To HAPPY*] Very hard man to see, y'know.

Happy [agreeing]. Oh, I know.

Willy [to BIFF]. Is that where you had the drinks?

Biff. Yeah, he gave me a couple of—no, no!

Happy [cutting in]. He told him my Florida idea.

Willy. Don't interrupt. [*To BIFF*] How'd he react to the Florida idea?

Biff. Dad, will you give me a minute to explain?

Willy. I've been waiting for you to explain since I sat down here! What happened? He took you into his office and what?

Biff. Well—I talked. And—and he listened, see.

Willy. Famous for the way he listens, y'know. What was his answer?

Biff. His answer was— [*He breaks off, suddenly angry*] Dad, you're not letting me tell you what I want to tell you!

Willy [accusing, angered]. You didn't see him, did you?

Biff. I did see him!

Willy. What'd you insult him or something? You insulted him, didn't you?

Biff. Listen, will you let me out of it, will you just let me out of it!

Happy. What the hell!

Willy. Tell me what happened!

Biff [to HAPPY]. I can't talk to him!

[*A single trumpet note jars the ear. The light of green leaves stains the house, which holds the air of night and a dream. Young BERNARD enters and knocks on the door of the house*]

Young Bernard [frantically]. Mrs. Loman, Mrs. Loman!

Happy. Tell him what happened!

Biff [to HAPPY]. Shut up and leave me alone!

Willy. No, no! You had to go and flunk math!

Biff. What math? What're you talking about?

Young Bernard. Mrs. Loman, Mrs. Loman!

[*LINDA appears in the house, as of old*]

Willy [wildly]. Math, math, math!

Biff. Take it easy, Pop!

Young Bernard. Mrs. Loman!

Willy [furiously]. If you hadn't flunked you'd've been set by now!

Biff. Now, look, I'm gonna tell you what happened, and you're going to listen to me.

Young Bernard. Mrs. Loman!

Biff. I waited six hours—

Happy. What the hell are you saying?

Biff. I kept sending in my name but he wouldn't see me. So finally he . . .

[*He continues unheard as light fades low on the restaurant*]

Young Bernard. Biff flunked math!

Linda. No!

Young Bernard. Birnbaum flunked him! They won't graduate him!

Linda. But they have to. He's gotta go to the university. Where is he? Biff! Biff!

Young Bernard. No, he left. He went to Grand Central.

Linda. Grand— You mean he went to Boston!

Young Bernard. Is Uncle Willy in Boston?

Linda. Oh, maybe Willy can talk to the teacher. Oh, the poor, poor boy!

[*Light on house area snaps out*]

Biff [at the table, now audible, holding up a gold fountain pen]. . . . so I'm washed up with Oliver, you understand? Are you listening to me?

Willy [at a loss]. Yeah, sure. If you hadn't flunked—

Biff. Flunked what? What're you talking about?

Willy. Don't blame everything on me!

ing and climbed the steps to the porch. The gravity of their profession is exaggerated—the unmistakable aura of the state institution with its cynical detachment. The DOCTOR rings the doorbell. The murmur of the game is interrupted]

Eunice [whispering to STELLA]. That must be them.

[STELLA presses her fists to her lips]

Blanche [rising slowly]. What is it?

Eunice [affectedly casual]. Excuse me while I see who's at the door.

Stella. Yes.

[EUNICE goes into the kitchen]

Blanche [tensely]. I wonder if it's for me.

[A whispered colloquy takes place at the door]

Eunice [returning, brightly]. Someone is calling for Blanche.

Blanche. It is for me, then! [She looks fearfully from one to the other and then to the portieres. The "Varsouviana" faintly plays] Is it the gentleman I was expecting from Dallas?

Eunice. I think it is, Blanche.

Blanche. I'm not quite ready.

Stella. Ask him to wait outside.

Blanche. I . . .

[EUNICE goes back to the portieres.

Drums sound very softly]

Stella. Everything packed?

Blanche. My silver toilet articles are still out.

Stella. Ah!

Eunice [returning]. They're waiting in front of the house.

Blanche. They! Who's "they"?

Eunice. There's a lady with him.

Blanche. I cannot imagine who this "lady" could be! How is she dressed?

Eunice. Just—just a sort of a—plain-tailored outfit.

Blanche. Possibly she's—

[Her voice dies out nervously]

Stella. Shall we go, Blanche?

Blanche. Must we go through that room?

Stella. I will go with you.

Blanche. How do I look?

Stella. Lovely.

Eunice [echoing]. Lovely.

[BLANCHE moves fearfully to the portieres. EUNICE draws them open for her. BLANCHE goes into the kitchen]

Blanche [to the men]. Please don't get up. I'm only passing through.

[She crosses quickly to outside door. STELLA and EUNICE follow. The poker players stand awkwardly at the table—all except MITCH, who remains seated, looking down at the table. BLANCHE steps out on a small porch at the side of the door. She stops short and catches her breath]

Doctor. How do you do?

Blanche. You are not the gentleman I was expecting. [She suddenly gasps and starts back up the steps. She stops by STELLA, who stands just outside the door, and speaks in a frightening whisper] That man isn't Shep Huntleigh.

[The "Varsouviana" is playing distantly]

[STELLA stares back at BLANCHE. EUNICE is holding STELLA'S arm. There is a moment of silence—no sound but that of STANLEY steadily shuffling the cards]

[BLANCHE catches her breath again and slips back into the flat with a peculiar smile, her eyes wide and brilliant. As soon as her sister goes past her, STELLA closes her eyes and clenches her hands. EUNICE throws her arms comfortingly about her. Then she starts up to her flat. BLANCHE stops just inside the door. MITCH keeps staring down at his hands on the table, but the other men look at her curiously. At last she starts toward the table toward the bedroom. As she does, STANLEY suddenly pushes back his chair and rises as if to block her way. The MATRON follows her into the flat]

Stanley. Did you forget something?

Blanche [shrilly]. Yes! Yes, I forgot something!

[She rushes past him into the bedroom. Lurid reflections appear on the walls in odd, sinuous shapes. The "Varsouviana" is filtered into a weird distortion, accompanied by the cries and noises of the jungle. BLANCHE seizes the back of a chair as if to defend herself]

Stanley [sotto voce]. Doc, you better go in.

Doctor [sotto voce, motioning to the MATRON]. Nurse, bring her out.

[The MATRON advances on one side, STANLEY on the other. Divested of all

the softer properties of womanhood, the MATRON is a peculiarly sinister figure in her severe dress." Her voice is bold and toneless as a firebell]

Matron. Hello, Blanche.

[The greeting is echoed and re-echoed by other mysterious voices behind the walls, as if reverberated through a canyon of rock]

Stanley. She says that she forgot something.

[The echo sounds in threatening whispers]

Matron. That's all right.

Stanley. What did you forget, Blanche?

Blanche. I—I—

Matron. It don't matter. We can pick it up later.

Stanley. Sure. We can send it along with the trunk.

Blanche [retreating in panic]. I don't know you—I don't know you. I want to be left alone—please!

Matron. Now, Blanche!

Echoes [rising and falling]. Now, Blanche—now, Blanche—now, Blanche!

Stanley. You left nothing here but spilt talcum and old empty perfume bottles—unless it's the paper lantern you want to take with you. You want the lantern?

[He crosses to dressing table and seizes the paper lantern, tearing it off the light bulb, and extends it toward her. She cries out as if the lantern was herself. The MATRON steps boldly toward her. She screams and tries to break past the MATRON. All the men spring to their feet. STELLA runs out to the porch, with EUNICE following to comfort her, simultaneously with the confused voices of the men in the kitchen. STELLA rushes into EUNICE's embrace on the porch]

Stella. Oh, my God, Eunice help me! Don't let them do that to her, don't let them hurt her! Oh, God, oh, please God, don't hurt her! What are they doing to her? What are they doing?

[She tries to break from EUNICE's arms]

Eunice. No, honey, no, no, honey. Stay here. Don't go back in there. Stay with me and don't look.

Stella. What have I done to my sister? Oh, God, what have I done to my sister?

Eunice. You done the right thing, the

only thing you could do. She couldn't stay here; there wasn't no other place for her to go.

[While STELLA and EUNICE are speaking on the porch the voices of the men in the kitchen overlap them. MITCH has started toward the bedroom. STANLEY crosses to block him. STANLEY pushes him aside. MITCH lunges and strikes at STANLEY. STANLEY pushes MITCH back. MITCH collapses at the table, sobbing]

[During the preceding scenes, the MATRON catches hold of BLANCHE's arm and prevents her flight. BLANCHE turns wildly and scratches at the MATRON. The heavy woman pinions her arms. BLANCHE cries out hoarsely and slips to her knees]

Matron. These fingernails have to be trimmed. [The Doctor comes into the room and she looks at him] Jacket, Doctor?

Doctor. Not unless necessary.

[He takes off his hat and now he becomes personalized. The unhuman quality goes. His voice is gentle and reassuring as he crosses to BLANCHE and crouches in front of her. As he speaks her name, her terror subsides a little. The lurid reflections fade from the walls, the inhuman cries and noises die out and her own hoarse crying is calmed]

Doctor. Miss DuBois.

[She turns her face to him and stares at him with desperate pleading. He smiles; then he speaks to the MATRON]

It won't be necessary.

Blanche [faintly]. Ask her to let go of me.

Doctor [to the MATRON]. Let go.

[The MATRON releases her. BLANCHE extends her hands toward the DOCTOR. He draws her up gently and supports her with his arm and leads her through the portieres]

Blanche [holding tight to his arm]. Whoever you are—I have always depended on the kindness of strangers.

[The poker players stand back as BLANCHE and the DOCTOR cross the kitchen to the front door. She allows him to lead her as if she were blind. As they go out on the porch, STELLA

cries out her sister's name from where she is crouched a few steps up on the stairs]

Stella. Blanche! Blanche! Blanche!

[BLANCHE walks on without turning, followed by the DOCTOR and the MATRON. They go around the corner of the building]

[EUNICE descends to STELLA and places the child in her arms]

[It is wrapped in a pale blue blanket.

STELLA accepts the child, sobbingly.

EUNICE continues downstairs and enters the kitchen where the men, except for STANLEY, are returning silently to their places about the table. STANLEY has gone out on the porch and stands

at the foot of the steps looking at STELLA]

Stanley [a bit uncertainly]. Stella?

[She sobs with inhuman abandon. There is something luxurious in her complete surrender to crying now that her sister is gone]

Stanley [voluptuously, soothingly]. Now, honey. Now, love. Now, now, love. [He kneels beside her and his fingers find the opening of her blouse] Now, now, love. Now, love. . . .

[The luxurious sobbing, the sensual murmur fade away under the swelling music of the "blue piano" and the muted trumpet]

Steve. This game is seven-card stud.

CURTAIN

DEATH OF A SALESMAN

CERTAIN PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS
IN TWO ACTS AND A REQUIEM

By ARTHUR MILLER

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ARTHUR MILLER AND HIS PLAYS

ARTHUR MILLER, playwright and novelist, was born in New York City in 1915. Unlike Tennessee Williams, with whom his work is almost inevitably compared, his background and experience is wholly urban, a fact that is significantly reflected in his plays. He has concerned himself almost exclusively with the life and problems of middle-class city dwellers, and his plays are written with the professed intention of making theater-going a provocative and illuminating experience for the "common man."

Miller's career is typical of the playwrights of his age—the period between two world wars—and generation—coming to maturity during the great depression—seeking a foothold in a constantly contracting theater. After graduation from the University of Michigan in 1938, where he had twice won the Avery Hopkins award for undergraduate playwriting, he first found professional employment in the Federal Theatre, a project sponsored by the Works Progress Administration to make it possible for unemployed artists to continue the practice of their profession. When the Federal Theatre came to its untimely end, Miller undertook the writing of radio plays for the Columbia Broadcasting System, toured army camps collecting background material to be used by the scriptwriters of the film, *The Story of GI Joe*. Some of this same material provided the subject matter for a volume of "reportage," *Situation Normal*, published in 1944.

In the same year, the first of his plays to achieve professional production appeared on Broadway "just long enough for the actors to put on their make-up." *The Man Who Had All the Luck*, in its shapelessness and its unrestrained admiration for the eccentricities of its characters, is vaguely reminiscent of the lesser works of William Saroyan. The reminiscence is presumably accidental, since Miller professes to admire such plays as *The Silver Cord* and *Anna Christie* and, above all, the works of Ibsen, none of which can be accused of structural informality or casual technique. The staging of *The Man Who Had All the Luck* was instructive, at least for Miller, in making plain how far he had drifted from his mentors.

His next two public appearances, as novelist and as dramatist, indicate how earnestly he labored to return to the tradition he admired. *Focus*, published in 1945, is an intensely exciting novel turning on anti-Semitism, of which the reader seems to find himself the victim. Miller achieves this effect by a series of tricks and technical devices to which some literary critics objected as being too "theatrical." The term is just, if the implied censure is not necessarily pertinent. In 1947, Miller turned his newly sharpened "theatrical" talents back to the theatre and wrote *All My Sons*. This is a well-made play in the Ibsen tradition, and it bears the virtues and drawbacks of the tradition without compromise. At the time of its production, it was pointed out that the plot was highly contrived, that exposition and preparation were handled with Euclidian artificiality, that far too much of the action turned on slips of the tongue and on a secreted letter. Since it is the nature of the drama to be artificial, the playwright's insistence on utter realism in setting and dialogue, pointing up the *coups de théâtre*, may be blamed for such criticisms. The general audience was undeterred, however; *All My Sons* had over 300 performances on Broadway, received the Drama Critic's Circle Award and was made into a highly successful film.

Two years later *Death of a Salesman*, one of the most successful plays of the American theater in this century, again revealed Miller as an artist constantly learning from his past experience. For here, without abandoning the structural methods of Ibsen which are for him the key to successful dramaturgy, Miller abandons the appearance of realism, the realism of the surface, in an attempt to give theatrical expression to the deeper, inner realities. He is thus, in a sense, driven to the devices of expressionism: the distorted, fragmented setting, the complete symbolism of objects and characters, the musical themes, the almost completely subjective point of view (see p. xiii). Miller's own belief in the necessity of creating a tragedy for the humble, however, prevents *Death of a Salesman* from becoming obscure and private as expressionistic plays too frequently do. In fact, the traditions of Ibsen exercise a strong control on the play. The visions of Willy Loman are merely dramatized (that is, acted-out) passages of exposition, probing in Ibsen's manner deeper and deeper into the past as the present action develops.

While there can be no equivocation about the success of *Death of a Salesman* with professional reviewers and the mass audience (like *All My Sons*, it was made into a popular

film), some objections have been raised to the quality of the play and to its right to be called a tragedy. It is certainly true that Miller makes free use of the clichés of the popular theatre (the studious, anemic boy opposed to the fine, healthy football player, for instance), but in the action he reveals their essential falsity, just as the action demonstrates the falsity of the ideals by which his hero lives. It is even notable that Willy's visions are always of the past, never of the future, and that even in reliving the past he is unwilling to understand the facts of the past, including the great dramatic fact of his son's discovery. As to the question of "tragedy," that is a question of labels. And no label can alter the fact that vast audiences left performances of *Death of a Salesman* firmly convinced that they had shared a tragic vision of life in the jungles of urban America.

Death of a Salesman was first produced under the direction of Elia Kazan in New York, February 10, 1949. Lee J. Cobb created the role of Willy Loman, which was later played by Thomas Mitchell and, in the movie, by Frederick March. Linda was played by Mildred Dunnoek, Biff by Arthur Kennedy, and Happy by Cameron Mitchell.

CHARACTERS

(in order of appearance)

WILLY LOMAN

LINDA

BIFF

HAPPY

BERNARD

THE WOMAN

CHARLEY

UNCLE BEN

HOWARD WAGNER

JENNY

STANLEY

MISS FORSYTHE

LETTA

The action takes place in Willy Loman's house and yard and in various places he visits in the New York and Boston of today.

Throughout the play, in the stage directions, left and right mean stage left and stage right.

DEATH OF A SALESMAN

ACT ONE

A melody is heard, played upon a flute. It is small and fine, telling of grass and trees and the horizon. The curtain rises.

Before us is the Salesman's house. We are aware of towering, angular shapes behind it, surrounding it on all sides. Only the blue light of the sky falls upon the house and forestage; the surrounding area shows an angry glow of orange. As more light appears, we see a solid vault of apartment houses around the small, fragile-seeming home. An air of the dream clings to the place, a dream rising out of reality. The kitchen at center seems actual enough, for there is a kitchen table with three chairs, and a refrigerator. But no other fixtures are seen. At the back of the kitchen there is a draped entrance, which leads to the living-room. To the right of the kitchen, on a level raised two feet, is a bedroom furnished only with a brass bedstead and a straight chair. On a shelf over the bed a silver athletic trophy stands. A window opens onto the apartment house at the side.

Behind the kitchen, on a level raised six and a half feet, is the boys' bedroom, at present barely visible. Two beds are dimly seen, and at the back of the room a dormer window. (This bedroom is above the unseen living-room.) At the left a stairway curves up to it from the kitchen.

The entire setting is wholly or, in some places, partially transparent. The roof-line of the house is one-dimensional; under and over it we see the apartment buildings. Before the house lies an apron, curving beyond the forestage into the orchestra. This forward area serves as the back yard as well as the locale of all Willy's imaginings and of his city scenes. Whenever the action is in the present the actors observe the imaginary wall-lines, entering the house only through its door at the left. But in the scenes of the past these boundaries are broken, and characters enter or leave a room by "stepping through" a wall onto the forestage.

From the right, WILLY LOMAN, the Salesman, enters, carrying two large sample cases.

The flute plays on. He hears but is not aware of it. He is past sixty years of age, dressed quietly. Even as he crosses the stage to the doorway of the house, his exhaustion is apparent. He unlocks the door, comes into the kitchen, and thankfully lets his burden down, feeling the soreness of his palms. A word-sigh escapes his lips—it might be "Oh, boy, oh, boy." He closes the door, then carries his cases out into the living-room, through the draped kitchen doorway.

LINDA, his wife, has stirred in her bed at the right. She gets out and puts on a robe, listening. Most often jovial, she has developed an iron repression of her exceptions to WILLY'S behavior—she more than loves him, she admires him, as though his mercurial nature, his temper, his massive dreams and little cruelties, served her only as sharp reminders of the turbulent longings within him, longings which she shares but lacks the temperament to utter and follow to their end.

Linda [hearing WILLY outside the bedroom, calls with some trepidation]. Willy!

Willy. It's all right. I came back.

Linda. Why? What happened? [Slight pause] Did something happen, Willy?

Willy. No, nothing happened.

Linda. You didn't smash the car, did you?

Willy [with casual irritation]. I said nothing happened. Didn't you hear me?

Linda. Don't you feel well?

Willy. I'm tired to the death. [The flute has faded away. He sits on the bed beside her, a little numb] I couldn't make it. I just couldn't make it, Linda.

Linda [very carefully, delicately]. Where were you all day? You look terrible.

Willy. I got as far as a little above Yonkers. I stopped for a cup of coffee. Maybe it was the coffee.

Linda. What?

Willy [after a pause]. I suddenly couldn't drive any more. The car kept going off onto the shoulder, y'know?

Linda [helpfully]. Oh. Maybe it was the

steering again. I don't think Angelo knows the Studebaker.

Willy. No, it's me, it's me. Suddenly I realize I'm goin' sixty miles an hour and I don't remember the last five minutes. I'm—I can't seem to—keep my mind to it.

Linda. Maybe it's your glasses. You never went for your new glasses.

Willy. No, I see everything. I came back ten miles an hour. It took me nearly four hours from Yonkers.

Linda [resigned]. Well, you'll just have to take a rest, Willy, you can't continue this way.

Willy. I just got back from Florida.

Linda. But you didn't rest your mind. Your mind is overactive, and the mind is what counts, dear.

Willy. I'll start out in the morning. Maybe I'll feel better in the morning. [*She is taking off his shoes*] These goddam arch supports are killing me.

Linda. Take an aspirin. Should I get you an aspirin? It'll soothe you.

Willy [with wonder]. I was driving along, you understand? And I was fine. I was even observing the scenery. You can imagine, me looking at scenery, on the road every week of my life. But it's so beautiful up there, Linda, the trees are so thick, and the sun is warm. I opened the windshield and just let the warm air bathe over me. And then all of a sudden I'm goin' off the road! I'm tellin' ya, I absolutely forgot I was driving. If I'd've gone the other way over the white line I might've killed somebody. So I went on again—and five minutes later I'm dreamin' again, and I nearly— [*He presses two fingers against his eyes*] I have such thoughts, I have such strange thoughts.

Linda. Willy, dear. Talk to them again. There's no reason why you can't work in New York.

Willy. They don't need me in New York. I'm the New England man. I'm vital in New England.

Linda. But you're sixty years old. They can't expect you to keep traveling every week.

Willy. I'll have to send a wire to Portland. I'm supposed to see Brown and Morrison tomorrow morning at ten o'clock to show the line. Goddammit, I could sell them!

[*He starts putting on his jacket*]

Linda [taking the jacket from him]. Why

don't you go down to the place tomorrow and tell Howard you've simply got to work in New York? You're too accommodating, dear.

Willy. If old man Wagner was alive I'd a been in charge of New York now! That man was a prince, he was a masterful man. But that boy of his, that Howard, he don't appreciate. When I went north the first time, the Wagner Company didn't know where New England was!

Linda. Why don't you tell those things to Howard, dear?

Willy [encouraged]. I will, I definitely will. Is there any cheese?

Linda. I'll make you a sandwich.

Willy. No, go to sleep. I'll take some milk. I'll be up right away. The boys in?

Linda. They're sleeping. Happy took Biff on a date tonight.

Willy [interested]. That so?

Linda. It was so nice to see them shaving together, one behind the other, in the bathroom. And going out together. You notice? The whole house smells of shaving lotion.

Willy. Figure it out. Work a lifetime to pay off a house. You finally own it, and there's nobody to live in it.

Linda. Well, dear, life is a casting off. It's always that way.

Willy. No, no, some people—some people accomplish something. Did Biff say anything after I went this morning?

Linda. You shouldn't have criticized him, Willy, especially after he just got off the train. You mustn't lose your temper with him.

Willy. When the hell did I lose my temper? I simply asked him if he was making any money. Is that a criticism?

Linda. But, dear, how could he make any money?

Willy [worried and angered]. There's such an undercurrent in him. He became a moody man. Did he apologize when I left this morning?

Linda. He was crestfallen, Willy. You know how he admires you. I think if he finds himself, then you'll both be happier and not fight any more.

Willy. How can he find himself on a farm? Is that a life? A farmhand? In the beginning, when he was young, I thought, well, a young man, it's good for him to tramp around, take a lot of different jobs.

But it's more than ten years now and he has yet to make thirty-five dollars a week!

Linda. He's finding himself, Willy.

Willy. Not finding yourself at the age of thirty-four is a disgrace!

Linda. Shh!

Willy. The trouble is he's lazy, goddammit!

Linda. Willy, please!

Willy. Biff is a lazy bum!

Linda. They're sleeping. Get something to eat. Go on down.

Willy. Why did he come home? I would like to know what brought him home.

Linda. I don't know. I think he's still lost, Willy. I think he's very lost.

Willy. Biff Loman is lost. In the greatest country in the world a young man with such—personal attractiveness, gets lost. And such a hard worker. There's one thing about Biff—he's not lazy.

Linda. Never.

Willy [*with pity and resolve*]. I'll see him in the morning; I'll have a nice talk with him. I'll get him a job selling. He could be big in no time. My God! Remember how they used to follow him around in high school? When he smiled at one of them their faces lit up. When he walked down the street . . .

[*He loses himself in reminiscences*]

Linda [*trying to bring him out of it*]. Willy, dear, I got a new kind of American-type cheese today. It's whipped.

Willy. Why do you get American when I like Swiss?

Linda. I just thought you'd like a change—

Willy. I don't want a change! I want Swiss cheese. Why am I always being contradicted?

Linda [*with a covering laugh*]. I thought it would be a surprise.

Willy. Why don't you open a window in here, for God's sake?

Linda [*with infinite patience*]. They're all open, dear.

Willy. The way they boxed us in here. Bricks and windows, windows and bricks.

Linda. We should've bought the land next door.

Willy. The street is lined with cars. There's not a breath of fresh air in the neighborhood. The grass don't grow any more, you can't raise a carrot in the back yard. They should've had a law against

apartment houses. Remember those two beautiful elm trees out there? When I and Biff hung the swing between them?

Linda. Yeah, like being a million miles from the city.

Willy. They should've arrested the builder for cutting those down. They massacred the neighborhood. [*Lost*] More and more I think of those days, Linda. This time of year it was lilac and wisteria. And then the peonies would come out, and the daffodils. What fragrance in this room!

Linda. Well, after all, people had to move somewhere.

Willy. No, there's more people now.

Linda. I don't think there's more people, I think—

Willy. There's more people! That's what's ruining this country! Population is getting out of control. The competition is maddening! Smell the stink from that apartment house! And another one on the other side . . . How can they whip cheese?

[*On WILLY's last line, BIFF and HAPPY raise themselves up in their beds, listening*]

Linda. Go down, try it. And be quiet.

Willy [*turning to LINDA, guiltily*]. You're not worried about me, are you, sweetheart?

Biff. What's the matter?

Happy. Listen!

Linda. You've got too much on the ball to worry about.

Willy. You're my foundation and my support, Linda.

Linda. Just try to relax, dear. You make mountains out of molehills.

Willy. I won't fight with him any more. If he wants to go back to Texas, let him go.

Linda. He'll find his way.

Willy. Sure. Certain men just don't get started till later in life. Like Thomas Edison, I think. Or B. F. Goodrich. One of them was deaf. [*He starts for the bedroom doorway*] I'll put my money on Biff.

Linda. And Willy—if it's warm Sunday we'll drive in the country. And we'll open the windshield, and take lunch.

Willy. No, the windshields don't open on the new cars.

Linda. But you opened it today.

Willy. Me? I didn't. [*He stops*] Now isn't that peculiar! Isn't that a remarkable—

[*He breaks off in amazement and fright as the flute is heard distantly*]

Linda. What, darling?

Willy. That is the most remarkable thing.

Linda. What, dear?

Willy. I was thinking of the Chevy. [Slight pause] Nineteen twenty-eight . . . when I had that red Chevy— [Breaks off] That funny? I coulda sworn I was driving that Chevy today.

Linda. Well, that's nothing. Something must've reminded you.

Willy. Remarkable. Ts. Remember those days? The way Biff used to simonize that car? The dealer refused to believe there was eighty thousand miles on it. [He shakes his head] Heh! [To LINDA] Close your eyes, I'll be right up.

[He walks out of the bedroom]

Happy [to BIFF]. Jesus, maybe he smashed up the car again!

Linda [calling after WILLY]. Be careful on the stairs, dear! The cheese is on the middle shelf!

[She turns, goes over to the bed, takes his jacket, and goes out of the bedroom]

[Light has risen on the boys' room. Unseen, WILLY is heard talking to himself, "Eighty thousand miles," and a little laugh. BIFF gets out of bed, comes downstage a bit, and stands attentively. BIFF is two years older than his brother HAPPY, well built, but in these days bears a worn air and seems less self-assured. He has succeeded less, and his dreams are stronger and less acceptable than HAPPY's. HAPPY is tall, powerfully made. Sexuality is like a visible color on him, or a scent that many women have discovered. He, like his brother, is lost, but in a different way, for he has never allowed himself to turn his face toward defeat and is thus more confused and hard-skinned, although seemingly more content]

Happy [getting out of bed]. He's going to get his license taken away if he keeps that up. I'm getting nervous about him, y'know, Biff?

Biff. His eyes are going.

Happy. No, I've driven with him. He sees all right. He just doesn't keep his mind on it. I drove into the city with him last week. He stops at a green light and then it turns red and he goes.

[He laughs]

Biff. Maybe he's color-blind.

Happy. Pop? Why he's got the finest eye for color in the business. You know that.

Biff [sitting down on his bed]. I'm going to sleep.

Happy. You're not still sour on Dad, are you, Biff?

Biff. He's all right, I guess.

Willy [underneath them, in the living-room]. Yes, sir, eighty thousand miles—eighty-two thousand!

Biff. You smoking?

Happy [holding out a pack of cigarettes]. Want one?

Biff [taking a cigarette]. I can never sleep when I smell it.

Willy. What a simonizing job, heh!

Happy [with deep sentiment]. Funny, Biff, y'know? Us sleeping in here again? The old beds. [He pats his bed affectionately] All the talk that went across those two beds, huh? Our whole lives.

Biff. Yeah. Lotta dreams and plans.

Happy [with a deep and masculine laugh]. About five hundred women would like to know what was said in this room.

[They share a soft laugh]

Biff. Remember that big Betsy something—what the hell was her name—over on Bushwick Avenue?

Happy [combing his hair]. With the collie dog!

Biff. That's the one. I got you in there, remember?

Happy. Yeah, that was my first time—I think. Boy, there was a pig! [They laugh, almost crudely] You taught me everything I know about women. Don't forget that.

Biff. I bet you forgot how bashful you used to be. Especially with girls.

Happy. Oh, I still am, Biff.

Biff. Oh, go on.

Happy. I just control it, that's all. I think I got less bashful and you got more so. What happened, Biff? Where's the old humor, the old confidence? [He shakes Biff's knee. Biff gets up and moves restlessly about the room] What's the matter?

Biff. Why does Dad mock me all the time?

Happy. He's not mocking you, he—

Biff. Everything I say there's a twist of mockery on his face. I can't get near him.

Happy. He just wants you to make good,

that's all. I wanted to talk to you about Dad for a long time, Biff. Something's—happening to him. He—talks to himself.

Biff. I noticed that this morning. But he always mumbled.

Happy. But not so noticeable. It got so embarrassing I sent him to Florida. And you know something? Most of the time he's talking to you.

Biff. What's he say about me?

Happy. I can't make it out.

Biff. What's he say about me?

Happy. I think the fact that you're not settled, that you're still kind of up in the air . . .

Biff. There's one or two other things depressing him, Happy.

Happy. What do you mean?

Biff. Never mind. Just don't lay it all to me.

Happy. But I think if you just got started—I mean—is there any future for you out there?

Biff. I tell ya, Hap, I don't know what the future is. I don't know—what I'm supposed to want.

Happy. What do you mean?

Biff. Well, I spent six or seven years after high school trying to work myself up. Shipping clerk, salesman, business of one kind or another. And it's a measly manner of existence. To get on that subway on the hot mornings in summer. To devote your whole life to keeping stock, or making phone calls, or selling or buying. To suffer fifty weeks of the year for the sake of a two-week vacation, when all you really desire is to be outdoors, with your shirt off. And always to have to get ahead of the next fella. And still—that's how you build a future.

Happy. Well, you really enjoy it on a farm? Are you content out there?

Biff [with rising agitation]. Hap, I've had twenty or thirty different kinds of jobs since I left home before the war, and it always turns out the same. I just realized it lately. In Nebraska when I herded cattle, and the Dakotas, and Arizona, and now in Texas. It's why I came home now, I guess, because I realized it. This farm I work on, it's spring there now, see? And they've got about fifteen new colts. There's nothing more inspiring or—beautiful than the sight of a mare and a new colt. And it's cool there now, see? Texas is cool now, and it's

spring. And whenever spring comes to where I am, I suddenly get the feeling, my God, I'm not gettin' anywhere! What the hell am I doing, playing around with horses, twenty-eight dollars a week! I'm thirty-four years old, I oughta be makin' my future. That's when I come running home. And now, I get here, and I don't know what to do with myself. [*After a pause*] I've always made a point of not wasting my life, and everytime I come back here I know that all I've done is to waste my life.

Happy. You're a poet, you know that, Biff? You're a—you're an idealist!

Biff. No, I'm mixed up very bad. Maybe I oughta get married. Maybe I oughta get stuck into something. Maybe that's my trouble. I'm like a boy. I'm not married, I'm not in business, I just—I'm like a boy. Are you content, Hap? You're a success, aren't you? Are you content?

Happy. Hell, no!

Biff. Why? You're making money, aren't you?

Happy [moving about with energy, expressiveness]. All I can do now is wait for the merchandise manager to die. And suppose I get to be merchandise manager? He's a good friend of mine, and he just built a terrific estate on Long Island. And he lived there about two months and sold it, and now he's building another one. He can't enjoy it once it's finished. And I know that's just what I would do. I don't know what the hell I'm workin' for. Sometimes I sit in my apartment—all alone. And I think of the rent I'm paying. And it's crazy. But then, it's what I always wanted. My own apartment, a car, and plenty of women. And still, goddammit, I'm lonely.

Biff [with enthusiasm]. Listen, why don't you come out West with me?

Happy. You and I, heh?

Biff. Sure, maybe we could buy a ranch. Raise cattle, use our muscles. Men built like we are should be working out in the open.

Happy [avidly]. The Loman Brothers, heh?

Biff [with vast affection]. Sure, we'd be known all over the counties!

Happy [enthralled]. That's what I dream about, Biff. Sometimes I want to just rip my clothes off in the middle of the store and outbox that goddam merchandise manager. I mean I can outbox, outrun, and outlift

anybody in that store, and I have to take orders from those common, petty sons-of-bitches till I can't stand it any more.

Biff. I'm tellin' you, kid, if you were with me I'd be happy out there.

Happy [enthused]. See, Biff, everybody around me is so false that I'm constantly lowering my ideals . . .

Biff. Baby, together we'd stand up for one another, we'd have someone to trust.

Happy. If I were around you—

Biff. Hap, the trouble is we weren't brought up to grub for money. I don't know how to do it.

Happy. Neither can I!

Biff. Then let's go!

Happy. The only thing is—what can you make out there?

Biff. But look at your friend. Builds an estate and then hasn't the peace of mind to live in it.

Happy. Yeah, but when he walks into the store the waves part in front of him. That's fifty-two thousand dollars a year coming through the revolving door, and I got more in my pinky finger than he's got in his head.

Biff. Yeah, but you just said—

Happy. I gotta show some of those pompous, self-important executives over there that Hap Loman can make the grade. I want to walk into the store the way he walks in. Then I'll go with you, Biff. We'll be together yet, I swear. But take those two we had tonight. Now weren't they gorgeous creatures?

Biff. Yeah, yeah, most gorgeous I've had in years.

Happy. I get that any time I want, Biff. Whenever I feel disgusted. The only trouble is, it gets like bowling or something. I just keep knockin' them over and it doesn't mean anything. You still run around a lot?

Biff. Naa. I'd like to find a girl—steady, somebody with substance.

Happy. That's what I long for.

Biff. Go on! You'd never come home.

Happy. I would! Somebody with character, with resistance! Like Mom, y'know? You're gonna call me a bastard when I tell you this. That girl Charlotte I was with tonight is engaged to be married in five weeks.

[*He tries on his new hat*]

Biff. No kiddin'!

Happy. Sure, the guy's in line for the

vice-presidency of the store. I don't know what gets into me, maybe I just have an overdeveloped sense of competition or something, but I went and ruined her, and furthermore I can't get rid of her. And he's the third executive I've done that to. Isn't that a crummy characteristic? And to top it all, I go to their weddings! [*Indignantly, but laughing*] Like I'm not supposed to take bribes. Manufacturers offer me a hundred-dollar bill now and then to throw an order their way. You know how honest I am, but it's like this girl, see. I hate myself for it. Because I don't want the girl, and, still, I take it and—I love it!

Biff. Let's go to sleep.

Happy. I guess we didn't settle anything, heh?

Biff. I just got one idea that I think I'm going to try.

Happy. What's that?

Biff. Remember Bill Oliver?

Happy. Sure, Oliver is very big now. You want to work for him again?

Biff. No, but when I quit he said something to me. He put his arm on my shoulder, and he said, "Biff, if you ever need anything, come to me."

Happy. I remember that. That sounds good.

Biff. I think I'll go to see him. If I could get ten thousand or even seven or eight thousand dollars I could buy a beautiful ranch.

Happy. I bet he'd back you. 'Cause he thought highly of you, Biff. I mean, they all do. You're well liked, Biff. That's why I say to come back here, and we both have the apartment. And I'm tellin' you, Biff, any babe you want . . .

Biff. No, with a ranch I could do the work I like and still be something. I just wonder though. I wonder if Oliver still thinks I stole that carton of basketballs.

Happy. Oh, he probably forgot that long ago. It's almost ten years. You're too sensitive. Anyway, he didn't really fire you.

Biff. Well, I think he was going to. I think that's why I quit. I was never sure whether he knew or not. I know he thought the world of me, though. I was the only one he'd let look up the place.

Willy [below]. You gonna wash the engine, Biff?

Happy. Shh!

[*Biff looks at HAPPY, who is gazing*

down, listening. *WILLY is mumbling in the parlor*

Happy. You hear that?

[They listen. WILLY laughs warmly]

Biff *[growing angry]*. Doesn't he know Mom can hear that?

Willy. Don't get your sweater dirty, Biff!

[A look of pain crosses BIFF's face]

Happy. Isn't that terrible? Don't leave again, will you? You'll find a job here. You gotta stick around. I don't know what to do about him, it's getting embarrassing.

Willy. What a simonizing job!

Biff. Mom's hearing that!

Willy. No kiddin', Biff, you got a date? Wonderful!

Happy. Go on to sleep. But talk to him in the morning, will you?

Biff *[reluctantly getting into bed]*. With her in the house. Brother!

Happy *[getting into bed]*. I wish you'd have a good talk with him.

[The light on their room begins to fade]

Biff *[to himself in bed]*. That selfish, stupid . . .

Happy. Sh . . . Sleep, Biff.

[Their light is out. Well before they have finished speaking, WILLY's form is dimly seen below in the darkened kitchen. He opens the refrigerator, searches in there, and takes out a bottle of milk. The apartment houses are fading out, and the entire house and surroundings become covered with leaves. Music insinuates itself as the leaves appear]

Willy. Just wanna be careful with those girls, Biff, that's all. Don't make any promises. No promises of any kind. Because a girl, y'know, they always believe what you tell 'em, and you're very young, Biff, you're too young to be talking seriously to girls.

[Light rises on the kitchen. WILLY, talking, shuts the refrigerator door and comes downstage to the kitchen table. He pours milk into a glass. He is totally immersed in himself, smiling faintly]

Willy. Too young entirely, Biff. You want to watch your schooling first. Then when you're all set, there'll be plenty of girls for a boy like you. *[He smiles broadly at a kitchen chair]* That so? The girls pay for you? *[He laughs]* Boy, you must really be makin' a hit.

[WILLY is gradually addressing—physi-

cally—a point offstage, speaking through the wall of the kitchen, and his voice has been rising in volume to that of a normal conversation]

Willy. I been wondering why you polish the car so careful. Ha! Don't leave the hubcaps, boys. Get the chamois to the hubcaps. Happy, use newspaper on the windows, it's the easiest thing. Show him how to do it, Biff! You see, Happy? Pad it up, use it like a pad. That's it, that's it, good work. You're doin' all right, Hap. *[He pauses, then nods in approbation for a few seconds, then looks upward]* Biff, first thing we gotta do when we get time is clip that big branch over the house. Afraid it's gonna fall in a storm and hit the roof. Tell you what. We get a rope and sling her around, and then we climb up there with a couple of saws and take her down. Soon as you finish the car, boys, I wanna see ya. I got a surprise for you, boys.

Biff *[offstage]*. Whatta ya got, Dad?

Willy. No, you finish first. Never leave a job till you're finished—remember that. *[Looking toward the "big trees"]* Biff, up in Albany I saw a beautiful hammock. I think I'll buy it next trip, and we'll hang it right between those two elms. Wouldn't that be something? Just swingin' there under those branches. Boy, that would be . . .

[Young BIFF and Young HAPPY appear from the direction WILLY was addressing. HAPPY carries rags and a pail of water. BIFF, wearing a sweater with a block "S," carries a football]

Biff *[pointing in the direction of the car offstage]*. How's that, Pop, professional?

Willy. Terrific. Terrific job, boys. Good work, Biff.

Happy. Where's the surprise, Pop?

Willy. In the back seat of the car.

Happy. Boy!

[He runs off]

Biff. What is it, Dad? Tell me, what'd you buy?

Willy *[laughing, cuffs him]*. Never mind, something I want you to have.

Biff *[turns and starts off]*. What is it, Hap?

Happy *[offstage]*. It's a punching bag!

Biff. Oh, Pop!

Willy. It's got Gene Tunney's signature on it!

[HAPPY runs onstage with a punching bag]

Biff. Gee, how'd you know we wanted a punching bag?

Willy. Well, it's the finest thing for the timing.

Happy [*lies down on his back and pedals with his feet*]. I'm losing weight, you notice, Pop?

Willy [*to HAPPY*]. Jumping rope is good too.

Biff. Did you see the new football I got?

Willy [*examining the ball*]. Where'd you get a new ball?

Biff. The coach told me to practice my passing.

Willy. That so? And he gave you the ball, heh?

Biff. Well, I borrowed it from the locker room.

[He laughs confidentially]

Willy [*laughing with him at the theft*]. I want you to return that.

Happy. I told you he wouldn't like it!

Biff [*angrily*]. Well, I'm bringing it back!

Willy [*stopping the incipient argument, to HAPPY*]. Sure, he's gotta practice with a regulation ball, doesn't he? [*To BIFF*]. Coach'll probably congratulate you on your initiative!

Biff. Oh, he keeps congratulating my initiative all the time, Pop.

Willy. That's because he likes you. If somebody else took that ball there'd be an uproar. So what's the report, boys, what's the report?

Biff. Where'd you go this time, Dad? Gee we were lonesome for you.

Willy [*pleased, puts an arm around each boy and they come down to the apron*]. Lonesome, heh?

Biff. Missed you every minute.

Willy. Don't say? Tell you a secret, boys. Don't breathe it to a soul. Someday I'll have my own business, and I'll never have to leave home any more.

Happy. Like Uncle Charley, heh?

Willy. Bigger than Uncle Charley! Because Charley is not—liked. He's liked, but he's not—well liked.

Biff. Where'd you go this time, Dad?

Willy. Well, I got on the road, and I went north to Providence. Met the Mayor.

Biff. The Mayor of Providence!

Willy. He was sitting in the hotel lobby.

Biff. What'd he say?

Willy. He said, "Morning!" And I said, "You got a fine city here, Mayor." And

then he had coffee with me. And then I went to Waterbury. Waterbury is a fine city. Big clock city, the famous Waterbury clock. Sold a nice bill there. And then Boston—Boston is the cradle of the Revolution. A fine city. And a couple of other towns in Mass., and on to Portland and Bangor and straight home!

Biff. Gee, I'd love to go with you sometime, Dad.

Willy. Soon as summer comes.

Happy. Promise?

Willy. You and Hap and I, and I'll show you all the towns. America is full of beautiful towns and fine, upstanding people. And they know me, boys, they know me up and down New England. The finest people. And when I bring you fellas up, there'll be open sesame for all of us, 'cause one thing, boys: I have friends. I can park my car in any street in New England, and the cops protect it like their own. This summer, heh?

Biff and Happy [*together*]. Yeah! You bet!

Willy. We'll take our bathing suits.

Happy. We'll carry your bags, Pop!

Willy. Oh, won't that be something! Me comin' into the Boston stores with you boys carryin' my bags. What a sensation!

[BIFF is prancing around, practicing passing the ball]

Willy. You nervous, Biff, about the game?

Biff. Not if you're gonna be there.

Willy. What do they say about you in school, now that they made you captain?

Happy. There's a crowd of girls behind him everytime the classes change.

Biff [*taking WILLY's hand*]. This Saturday, Pop, this Saturday—just for you, I'm going to break through for a touchdown.

Happy. You're supposed to pass.

Biff. I'm takin' one play for Pop. You watch me, Pop, and when I take off my helmet, that means I'm breakin' out. Then you watch me crash through that line!

Willy [*kisses BIFF*]. Oh, wait'll I tell this in Boston!

[BERNARD enters in knickers. He is younger than BIFF, earnest and loyal, a worried boy]

Bernard. Biff, where are you? You're supposed to study with me today.

Willy. Hey, looka Bernard. What're you lookin' so anemic about, Bernard?

Bernard. He's gotta study, Uncle Willy. He's got Regents next week.

Happy [tauntingly, spinning BERNARD around]. Let's box, Bernard!

Bernard. Biff! [He gets away from HAPPY] Listen, Biff, I heard Mr. Birnbaum say that if you don't start studyin' math he's gonna flunk you, and you won't graduate. I heard him!

Willy. You better study with him, Biff. Go ahead now.

Bernard. I heard him!

Biff. Oh, Pop, you didn't see my sneakers!

[He holds up a foot for WILLY to look at]

Willy. Hey, that's a beautiful job of printing!

Bernard [wiping his glasses]. Just because he printed University of Virginia on his sneakers doesn't mean they've got to graduate him, Uncle Willy!

Willy [angrily]. What're you talking about? With scholarships to three universities they're gonna flunk him?

Bernard. But I heard Mr. Birnbaum say—

Willy. Don't be a pest, Bernard! [To his boys] What an anemic!

Bernard. Okay, I'm waiting for you in my house, Biff.

[BERNARD goes off. The Lomans laugh]

Willy. Bernard is not well liked, is he?

Biff. He's liked, but he's not well liked.

Happy. That's right, Pop.

Willy. That's just what I mean. Bernard can get the best marks in school, y'understand, but when he gets out in the business world, y'understand, you are going to be five times ahead of him. That's why I thank Almighty God you're both built like Adonises. Because the man who makes an appearance in the business world, the man who creates personal interest, is the man who gets ahead. Be liked and you will never want. You take me, for instance. I never have to wait in line to see a buyer. "Willy Loman is here!" That's all they have to know, and I go right through.

Biff. Did you knock them dead, Pop?

Willy. Knocked 'em cold in Providence, slaughtered 'em in Boston.

Happy [on his back, pedaling again]. I'm losing weight, you notice, Pop?

[LINDA enters, as of old, a ribbon in her hair, carrying a basket of washing]

Linda [with youthful energy]. Hello, dear!

Willy. Sweetheart!

Linda. How'd the Chevvy run?

Willy. Chevrolet, Linda, is the greatest car ever built. [To the boys] Since when do you let your mother carry wash up the stairs?

Biff. Grab hold there, boy!

Happy. Where to, Mom?

Linda. Hang them up on the line. And you better go down to your friends, Biff. The cellar is full of boys. They don't know what to do with themselves.

Biff. Ah, when Pop comes home they can wait!

Willy [laughs appreciatively]. You better go down and tell them what to do, Biff.

Biff. I think I'll have them sweep out the furnace room.

Willy. Good work, Biff.

Biff [goes through wall-line of kitchen to doorway at back and calls down]. Fellas! Everybody sweep out the furnace room! I'll be right down!

Voices. All right! Okay, Biff.

Biff. George and Sam and Frank, come out back! We're hangin' up the wash! Come on, Hap, on the double!

[He and HAPPY carry out the basket]

Linda. The way they obey him!

Willy. Well, that's training, the training. I'm tellin' you, I was sellin' thousands and thousands, but I had to come home.

Linda. Oh, the whole block'll be at that game. Did you sell anything?

Willy. I did five hundred gross in Providence and seven hundred gross in Boston.

Linda. No! Wait a minute, I've got a pencil. [She pulls pencil and paper out of her apron pocket] That makes your commission . . . Two hundred—my God! Two hundred and twelve dollars!

Willy. Well, I didn't figure it yet, but . . .

Linda. How much did you do?

Willy. Well, I—I did—about a hundred and eighty gross in Providence. Well, no—it came to—roughly two hundred gross on the whole trip.

Linda [without hesitation]. Two hundred gross. That's . . .

[She figures]

Willy. The trouble was that three of the stores were half closed for inventory in Boston. Otherwise I woulda broke records:

Linda. Well, it makes seventy dollars and some pennies. That's very good.

Willy. What do we owe?

Linda. Well, on the first there's sixteen dollars on the refrigerator—

Willy. Why sixteen?

Linda. Well, the fan belt broke, so it was a dollar eighty.

Willy. But it's brand new.

Linda. Well, the man said that's the way it is. Till they work themselves in, y'know.

[They move through the wall-line into the kitchen]

Willy. I hope we didn't get stuck on that machine.

Linda. They got the biggest ads of any of them!

Willy. I know, it's a fine machine. What else?

Linda. Well, there's nine-sixty for the washing machine. And for the vacuum cleaner there's three and a half due on the fifteenth. Then the roof, you got twenty-one dollars remaining.

Willy. It don't leak, does it?

Linda. No, they did a wonderful job. Then you owe Frank for the carburetor.

Willy. I'm not going to pay that man! That goddam Chevrolet, they ought to prohibit the manufacture of that car!

Linda. Well, you owe him three and a half. And odds and ends, comes to around a hundred and twenty dollars by the fifteenth.

Willy. A hundred and twenty dollars! My God, if business don't pick up I don't know what I'm gonna do!

Linda. Well, next week you'll do better.

Willy. Oh, I'll knock 'em dead next week. I'll go to Hartford. I'm very well liked in Hartford. You know, the trouble is, Linda, people don't seem to take to me.

[They move onto the forestage]

Linda. Oh, don't be foolish.

Willy. I know it when I walk in. They seem to laugh at me.

Linda. Why? Why would they laugh at you? Don't talk that way, Willy.

[WILLY moves to the edge of the stage.]

LINDA goes into the kitchen and starts to darn stockings]

Willy. I don't know the reason for it, but they just pass me by. I'm not noticed.

Linda. But you're doing wonderful, dear. You're making seventy to a hundred dollars a week.

Willy. But I gotta be at it ten, twelve hours a day. Other men—I don't know—they do it easier. I don't know why—I can't stop myself—I talk too much. A man oughta come in with a few words. One thing about Charley. He's a man of few words, and they respect him.

Linda. You don't talk too much, you're just lively.

Willy [smiling]. Well, I figure, what the hell, life is short, a couple of jokes. *[To himself]* I joke too much!

[The smile goes]

Linda. Why? You're—

Willy. I'm fat. I'm very—foolish to look at, Linda. I didn't tell you, but Christmas time I happened to be calling on F. H. Stewarts, and a salesman I know, as I was going in to see the buyer I heard him say something about—walrus. And I—I cracked him right across the face. I won't take that. I simply will not take that. But they do laugh at me. I know that.

Linda. Darling . . .

Willy. I gotta overcome it. I know I gotta overcome it. I'm not dressing to advantage, maybe.

Linda. Willy, darling, you're the handsomest man in the world—

Willy. Oh, no, Linda.

Linda. To me you are. *[Slight pause]* The handsomest.

[From the darkness is heard the laughter of a woman. WILLY doesn't turn to it, but it continues through LINDA'S lines]

Linda. And the boys, Willy. Few men are idolized by their children the way you are.

[Music is heard as behind a scrim, to the left of the house, THE WOMAN, dimly seen, is dressing]

Willy [with great feeling]. You're the best there is, Linda, you're a pal, you know that? On the road—on the road I want to grab you sometimes and just kiss the life outa you.

[The laughter is loud now, and he moves into a brightening area at the left, where THE WOMAN has come from behind the scrim and is standing, putting on her hat, looking into a "mirror" and laughing]

Willy. 'Cause I get so lonely—especially when business is bad and there's nobody to talk to. I get the feeling that I'll never sell

anything again, that I won't make a living for you, or a business, a business for the boys. [*He talks through THE WOMAN'S subsiding laughter; THE WOMAN primps at the "mirror"*] There's so much I want to make for—

The Woman. Me? You didn't make me, Willy. I picked you.

Willy [*pleased*]. You picked me?

The Woman [*who is quite proper-looking, WILLY'S age*]. I did. I've been sitting at that desk watching all the salesmen go by, day in, day out. But you've got such a sense of humor, and we do have such a good time together, don't we?

Willy. Sure, sure. [*He takes her in his arms*] Why do you have to go now?

The Woman. It's two o'clock . . .

Willy. No, come on in!

[*He pulls her*]

The Woman. . . . my sisters'll be scandalized. When'll you be back?

Willy. Oh, two weeks about. Will you come up again?

The Woman. Sure thing. You do make me laugh. It's good for me. [*She squeezes his arm, kisses him*] And I think you're a wonderful man.

Willy. You picked me, heh?

The Woman. Sure. Because you're so sweet. And such a kidder.

Willy. Well, I'll see you next time I'm in Boston.

The Woman. I'll put you right through to the buyers.

Willy [*slapping her bottom*]. Right. Well, bottoms up!

The Woman [*slaps him gently and laughs*]. You just kill me, Willy. [*He suddenly grabs her and kisses her roughly*] You kill me. And thanks for the stockings. I love a lot of stockings. Well, good night.

Willy. Good night. And keep your pores open!

The Woman. Oh, Willy!

[*THE WOMAN bursts out laughing, and LINDA'S laughter blends in. THE WOMAN disappears into the dark. Now the area at the kitchen table brightens. LINDA is sitting where she was at the kitchen table, but now is mending a pair of her silk stockings*]

Linda. You are, Willy. The handsomest man. You've got no reason to feel that—

Willy [*coming out of THE WOMAN'S dimming area and going over to LINDA*].

I'll make it all up to you, Linda, I'll—

Linda. There's nothing to make up, dear. You're doing fine, better than—

Willy [*noticing her mending*]. What's that?

Linda. Just mending my stockings. They're so expensive—

Willy [*angrily, taking them from her*]. I won't have you mending stockings in this house! Now throw them out!

[*LINDA puts the stockings in her pocket*]

Bernard [*entering on the run*]. Where is he? If he doesn't study!

Willy [*moving to the forestage, with great agitation*]. You'll give him the answers!

Bernard. I do, but I can't on a Regents! That's a state exam! They're liable to arrest me!

Willy. Where is he? I'll whip him, I'll whip him!

Linda. And he'd better give back that football, Willy, it's not nice.

Willy. Biff! Where is he? Why is he taking everything?

Linda. He's too rough with the girls, Willy. All the mothers are afraid of him!

Willy. I'll whip him!

Bernard. He's driving the car without a license!

[*THE WOMAN'S laugh is heard*]

Willy. Shut up!

Linda. All the mothers—

Willy. Shut up!

Bernard [*backing quietly away and out*]. Mr. Birnbaum says he's stuck up.

Willy. Get outa here!

Bernard. If he doesn't buckle down he'll flunk math!

[*He goes off*]

Linda. He's right, Willy, you've gotta—

Willy [*exploding at her*]. There's nothing the matter with him! You want him to be a worm like Bernard? He's got spirit, personality . . .

[*As he speaks, LINDA, almost in tears, exits into the living-room. WILLY is alone in the kitchen, wilting and staring. The leaves are gone. It is night again, and the apartment houses look down from behind*]

Willy. Loaded with it. Loaded! What is he stealing? He's giving it back, isn't he? Why is he stealing? What did I tell him? I never in my life told him anything but decent things.

[*HAPPY in pajamas has come down the*

stairs; *WILLY suddenly becomes aware of HAPPY's presence*

Happy. Let's go now, come on.

Willy [*sitting down at the kitchen table*]. Huh! Why did she have to wax the floors herself? Everytime she waxes the floors she keels over. She knows that!

Happy. Shh! Take it easy. What brought you back tonight?

Willy. I got an awful scare. Nearly hit a kid in Yonkers. God! Why didn't I go to Alaska with my brother Ben that time! Ben! That man was a genius, that man was success incarnate! What a mistake! He begged me to go.

Happy. Well, there's no use in—

Willy. You guys! There was a man started with the clothes on his back and ended up with diamond mines!

Happy. Boy, someday I'd like to know how he did it.

Willy. What's the mystery? The man knew what he wanted and went out and got it! Walked into a jungle, and comes out, the age of twenty-one, and he's rich! The world is an oyster, but you don't crack it open on a mattress!

Happy. Pop, I told you I'm gonna retire you for life.

Willy. You'll retire me for life on seventy goddam dollars a week? And your women and your car and your apartment, and you'll retire me for life! Christ's sake, I couldn't get past Yonkers today! Where are you guys, where are you? The woods are burning! I can't drive a car!

[*CHARLEY has appeared in the doorway.*

He is a large man, slow of speech, laconic, immovable. In all he says, despite what he says, there is pity, and, now, trepidation. He has a robe over pajamas, slippers on his feet.

He enters the kitchen]

Charley. Everything all right?

Happy. Yeah, Charley, everything's . . .

Willy. What's the matter?

Charley. I heard some noise. I thought something happened. Can't we do something about the walls? You sneeze in here, and in my house hats blow off.

Happy. Let's go to bed, Dad. Come on.

[*CHARLEY signals to HAPPY to go*]

Willy. You go ahead, I'm not tired at the moment.

Happy [*to WILLY*]. Take it easy, huh?
[*He exits*]

Willy. What're you doin' up?

Charley [*sitting down at the kitchen table opposite WILLY*]. Couldn't sleep good. I had a heartburn.

Willy. Well, you don't know how to eat.

Charley. I eat with my mouth.

Willy. No, you're ignorant. You gotta know about vitamins and things like that.

Charley. Come on, let's shoot. Tire you out a little.

Willy [*hesitantly*]. All right. You got cards?

Charley [*taking a deck from his pocket*]. Yeah, I got them. Someplace. What is it with those vitamins?

Willy [*dealing*]. They build up your bones. Chemistry.

Charley. Yeah, but there's no bones in a heartburn.

Willy. What are you talkin' about? Do you know the first thing about it?

Charley. Don't get insulted.

Willy. Don't talk about something you don't know anything about.

[*They are playing. Pause*]

Charley. What're you doin' home?

Willy. A little trouble with the car.

Charley. Oh. [*Pause*] I'd like to take a trip to California.

Willy. Don't say.

Charley. You want a job?

Willy. I got a job, I told you that. [*After a slight pause*] What the hell are you offering me a job for?

Charley. Don't get insulted.

Willy. Don't insult me.

Charley. I don't see no sense in it. You don't have to go on this way.

Willy. I got a good job. [*Slight pause*] What do you keep comin' in here for?

Charley. You want me to go?

Willy [*after a pause, withering*]. I can't understand it. He's going back to Texas again. What the hell is that?

Charley. Let him go.

Willy. I got nothin' to give him, Charley, I'm clean, I'm clean.

Charley. He won't starve. None a them starve. Forget about him.

Willy. Then what have I got to remember?

Charley. You take it too hard. To hell with it. When a deposit bottle is broken you don't get your nickel back.

Willy. That's easy enough for you to say.

Charley. That ain't easy for me to say.

Willy. Did you see the ceiling I put up in the living-room?

Charley. Yeah, that's a piece of work. To put up a ceiling is a mystery to me. How do you do it?

Willy. What's the difference?

Charley. Well, talk about it.

Willy. You gonna put up a ceiling?

Charley. How could I put up a ceiling?

Willy. Then what the hell are you both-ering me for?

Charley. You're insulted again.

Willy. A man who can't handle tools is not a man. You're disgusting.

Charley. Don't call me disgusting, Willy.

[UNCLE BEN, carrying a valise and an umbrella, enters the forestage from around the right corner of the house. He is a stolid man, in his sixties, with a mustache and an authoritative air. He is utterly certain of his destiny, and there is an aura of far places about him. He enters exactly as WILLY speaks]

Willy. I'm getting awfully tired, Ben.

[BEN'S music is heard. BEN looks around at everything]

Charley. Good, keep playing; you'll sleep better. Did you call me Ben?

[BEN looks at his watch]

Willy. That's funny. For a second there you reminded me of my brother Ben.

Ben. I only have a few minutes.

[He strolls, inspecting the place. WILLY and CHARLEY continue playing]

Charley. You never heard from him again, eh? Since that time?

Willy. Didn't Linda tell you? Couple of weeks ago we got a letter from his wife in Africa. He died.

Charley. That so.

Ben [chuckling]. So this is Brooklyn, eh?

Charley. Maybe you're in for some of his money.

Willy. Naa, he had seven sons. There's just one opportunity I had with that man . . .

Ben. I must make a train, William. There are several properties I'm looking at in Alaska.

Willy. Sure, sure! If I'd gone with him to Alaska that time, everything would've been totally different.

Charley. Go on, you'd froze to death up there.

Willy. What're you talking about?

Ben. Opportunity is tremendous in Alaska, William. Surprised you're not up there.

Willy. Sure, tremendous.

Charley. Heh?

Willy. There was the only man I ever met who knew the answers.

Charley. Who?

Ben. How are you all?

Willy [taking a pot, smiling]. Fine, fine.

Charley. Pretty sharp tonight.

Ben. Is Mother living with you?

Willy. No, she died a long time ago.

Charley. Who?

Ben. That's too bad. Fine specimen of a lady, Mother.

Willy [to CHARLEY]. Heh?

Ben. I'd hoped to see the old girl.

Charley. Who died?

Ben. Heard anything from Father, have you?

Willy [unnerved]. What do you mean, who died?

Charley [taking a pot]. What're you talkin' about?

Ben [looking at his watch]. William, it's half-past eight!

Willy [as though to dispel his confusion he angrily stops CHARLEY'S hand]. That's my build!

Charley. I put the ace—

Willy. If you don't know how to play the game I'm not gonna throw my money away on you!

Charley [rising]. It was my ace, for God's sake!

Willy. I'm through, I'm through!

Ben. When did Mother die?

Willy. Long ago. Since the beginning you never knew how to play cards.

Charley [picks up the cards and goes to the door]. All right! Next time I'll bring a deck with five aces.

Willy. I don't play that kind of game!

Charley [turning to him]. You ought to be ashamed of yourself!

Willy. Yeah?

Charley. Yeah!

[He goes out]

Willy [slamming the door after him]. Ignoramus!

Ben [as WILLY comes toward him through the wall-line of the kitchen]. So you're William.

Willy [shaking BEN'S hand]. Ben! I've

been waiting for you so long! What's the answer? How did you do it?

Ben. Oh, there's a story in that.

[*LINDA enters the forestage, as of old, carrying the wash basket*]

Linda. Is this Ben?

Ben [*gallantly*]. How do you do, my dear.

Linda. Where've you been all these years? Willy's always wondered why you—

Willy [*pulling BEN away from her impatiently*]. Where is Dad? Didn't you follow him? How did you get started?

Ben. Well, I don't know how much you remember.

Willy. Well, I was just a baby, of course, only three or four years old—

Ben. Three years and eleven months.

Willy. What a memory, Ben!

Ben. I have many enterprises, William, and I have never kept books.

Willy. I remember I was sitting under the wagon in—was it Nebraska?

Ben. It was South Dakota, and I gave you a bunch of wild flowers.

Willy. I remember you walking away down some open road.

Ben [*laughing*]. I was going to find Father in Alaska.

Willy. Where is he?

Ben. At that age I had a very faulty view of geography, William. I discovered after a few days that I was heading due south, so instead of Alaska, I ended up in Africa.

Linda. Africa!

Willy. The Gold Coast!

Ben. Principally diamond mines.

Linda. Diamond mines!

Ben. Yes, my dear. But I've only a few minutes—

Willy. No! Boys! Boys! [*Young BIFF and HAPPY appear*] Listen to this. This is your Uncle Ben, a great man! Tell my boys, Ben!

Ben. Why, boys, when I was seventeen I walked into the jungle, and when I was twenty-one I walked out. [*He laughs*] And by God I was rich.

Willy [*to the boys*]. You see what I been talking about? The greatest things can happen!

Ben [*glancing at his watch*]. I have an appointment in Ketchikan Tuesday week.

Willy. No, Ben! Please tell about Dad. I want my boys to hear. I want them to

know the kind of stock they spring from. All I remember is a man with a big beard, and I was in Mamma's lap, sitting around a fire, and some kind of high music.

Ben. His flute. He played the flute.

Willy. Sure, the flute, that's right!

[*New music is heard, a high, rollicking tune*]

Ben. Father was a very great and a very wild-hearted man. We would start in Boston, and he'd toss the whole family into the wagon, and then he'd drive the team right across the country; through Ohio, and Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, and all the Western states. And we'd stop in the towns and sell the flutes that he'd made on the way. Great inventor, Father. With one gadget he made more in a week than a man like you could make in a lifetime.

Willy. That's just the way I'm bringing them up, Ben—rugged, well liked, all-around.

Ben. Yeah? [*To BIFF*]. Hit that, boy—hard as you can.

[*He pounds his stomach*]

BiFF. Oh, no, sir!

Ben [*taking boxing stance*]. Come on, get to me!

[*He laughs*]

Willy. Go to it, Biff! Go ahead, show him!

BiFF. Okay!

[*He cocks his fists and starts in*]

Linda [*to WILLY*]. Why must he fight, dear?

Ben [*sparring with BIFF*]. Good boy! Good boy!

Willy. How's that, Ben, heh?

Happy. Give him the left, Biff!

Linda. Why are you fighting?

Ben. Good boy!

[*Suddenly comes in, trips BIFF, and stands over him, the point of his umbrella poised over BIFF's eye*]

Linda. Look out, Biff!

BiFF. Gee!

Ben [*patting BIFF's knee*]. Never fight fair with a stranger, boy. You'll never get out of the jungle that way. [*Taking LINDA's hand and bowing*] It was an honor and a pleasure to meet you, Linda.

Linda [*withdrawing her hand coldly, frightened*]. Have a nice—trip.

Ben [*to WILLY*]. And good luck with your—what do you do?

Willy. Selling.

Ben. Yes. Well . . .

[*He raises his hand in farewell to all*]

Willy. No, Ben, I don't want you to think . . . [*He takes BEN's arm to show him*] It's Brooklyn, I know, but we hunt too.

Ben. Really, now.

Willy. Oh, sure, there's snakes and rabbits and—that's why I moved out here. Why, Biff can fell any one of these trees in no time! Boys! Go right over to where they're building the apartment house and get some sand. We're gonna rebuild the entire front stoop right now! Watch this, Ben!

Biff. Yes, sir! On the double, Hap!

Happy [*as he and BIFF run off*]. I lost weight, Pop, you notice?

[*CHARLEY enters in knickers, even before the boys are gone*]

Charley. Listen, if they steal any more from that building the watchman'll put the cops on them!

Linda [*to WILLY*]. Don't let Biff . . .

[*BEN laughs lustily*]

Willy. You shoulda seen the lumber they brought home last week. At least a dozen six-by-tens worth all kinds a money.

Charley. Listen, if that watchman—

Willy. I gave them hell, understand. But I got a couple of fearless characters there.

Charley. Willy, the jails are full of fearless characters.

Ben [*clapping WILLY on the back, with a laugh at CHARLEY*]. And the stock exchange, friend!

Willy [*joining in BEN's laughter*]. Where are the rest of your pants?

Charley. My wife bought them.

Willy. Now all you need is a golf club and you can go upstairs and go to sleep. [*To BEN*] Great athlete! Between him and his son Bernard they can't hammer a nail!

Bernard [*rushing in*]. The watchman's chasing Biff!

Willy [*angrily*]. Shut up! He's not stealing anything!

Linda [*alarmed, hurrying off left*]. Where is he? Biff, dear!

[*She exits*]

Willy [*moving toward the left, away from BEN*]. There's nothing wrong. What's the matter with you?

Ben. Nervy boy. Good!

Willy [*laughing*]. Oh, nerves of iron, that Biff!

Charley. Don't know what it is. My New England man comes back and he's bleedin', they murdered him up there.

Willy. It's contacts, Charley, I got important contacts!

Charley [*sarcastically*]. Glad to hear it, Willy. Come in later, we'll shoot a little casino. I'll take some of your Portland money.

[*He laughs at WILLY and exits*]

Willy [*turning to BEN*]. Business is bad, it's murderous. But not for me, of course.

Ben. I'll stop by on my way back to Africa.

Willy [*longingly*]. Can't you stay a few days? You're just what I need, Ben, because I—I have a fine position here, but I—well, Dad left when I was such a baby and I never had a chance to talk to him and I still feel—kind of temporary about myself.

Ben. I'll be late for my train.

[*They are at opposite ends of the stage*]

Willy. Ben, my boys—can't we talk? They'd go into the jaws of hell for me, see, but I—

Ben. William, you're being first-rate with your boys. Outstanding, manly chaps!

Willy [*hanging on to his words*]. Oh, Ben, that's good to hear! Because sometimes I'm afraid that I'm not teaching them the right kind of— Ben, how should I teach them?

Ben [*giving great weight to each word, and with a certain vicious audacity*]. William, when I walked into the jungle, I was seventeen. When I walked out I was twenty-one. And, by God, I was rich!

[*He goes off into darkness around the right corner of the house*]

Willy. . . . was rich! That's just the spirit I want to imbue them with! To walk into a jungle! I was right! I was right! I was right!

[*BEN is gone, but WILLY is still speaking to him as LINDA, in nightgown and robe, enters the kitchen, glances around for WILLY, then goes to the door of the house, looks out and sees him. Comes down to his left. He looks at her*]

Linda. Willy, dear? Willy?

Willy. I was right!

Linda. Did you have some cheese? [*He can't answer*] It's very late, darling. Come to bed, heh?

Willy [looking straight up]. Gotta break your neck to see a star in this yard.

Linda. You coming in?

Willy. Whatever happened to that diamond watch fob? Remember? When Ben came from Africa that time? Didn't he give me a watch fob with a diamond in it?

Linda. You pawned it, dear. Twelve, thirteen years ago. For Biff's radio correspondence course.

Willy. Gee, that was a beautiful thing. I'll take a walk.

Linda. But you're in your slippers.

Willy [starting to go around the house at the left]. I was right! I was! [Half to Linda, as he goes, shaking his head] What a man! There was a man worth talking to. I was right!

Linda [calling after WILLY]. But in your slippers, Willy!

[WILLY is almost gone when BIFF, in his pajamas, comes down the stairs and enters the kitchen.]

Biff. What is he doing out there?

Linda. Sh!

Biff. God Almighty, Mom, how long has he been doing this?

Linda. Don't, he'll hear you.

Biff. What the hell is the matter with him?

Linda. It'll pass by morning.

Biff. Shouldn't we do anything?

Linda. Oh, my dear, you should do a lot of things, but there's nothing to do, so go to sleep.

[HAPPY comes down the stairs and sits on the steps]

Happy. I never heard him so loud, Mom.

Linda. Well, come around more often; you'll hear him.

[She sits down at the table and mends the lining of WILLY's jacket]

Biff. Why didn't you ever write me about this, Mom?

Linda. How would I write to you? For over three months you had no address.

Biff. I was on the move. But you know I thought of you all the time. You know that, don't you, pal?

Linda. I know, dear, I know. But he likes to have a letter. Just to know that there's still a possibility for better things.

Biff. He's not like this all the time, is he?

Linda. It's when you come home he's always the worst.

Biff. When I come home?

Linda. When you write you're coming, he's all smiles, and talks about the future, and—he's just wonderful. And then the closer you seem to come, the more shaky he gets, and then, by the time you get here, he's arguing, and he seems angry at you. I think it's just that maybe he can't bring himself to—to open up to you. Why are you so hateful to each other? Why is that?

Biff [evasively]. I'm not hateful, Mom.

Linda. But you no sooner come in the door than you're fighting!

Biff. I don't know why. I mean to change. I'm tryin', Mom, you understand?

Linda. Are you home to stay now?

Biff. I don't know. I want to look around, see what's doin'.

Linda. Biff, you can't look around all your life, can you?

Biff. I just can't take hold, Mom. I can't take hold of some kind of a life.

Linda. Biff, a man is not a bird, to come and go with the springtime.

Biff. Your hair . . . [He touches her hair] Your hair got so gray.

Linda. Oh, it's been gray since you were in high school. I just stopped dyeing it, that's all.

Biff. Dye it again, will ya? I don't want my pal looking old.

[He smiles]

Linda. You're such a boy! You think you can go away for a year and . . . You've got to get it into your head now that one day you'll knock on this door and there'll be strange people here—

Biff. What are you talking about? You're not even sixty, Mom.

Linda. But what about your father?

Biff [lamely]. Well, I meant him too.

Happy. He admires Pop.

Linda. Biff, dear, if you don't have any feeling for him, then you can't have any feeling for me.

Biff. Sure I can, Mom.

Linda. No. You can't just come to see me, because I love him. [With a threat, but only a threat, of tears] He's the dearest man in the world to me, and I won't have anyone making him feel unwanted and low and blue. You've got to make up your mind now, darling, there's no leeway any more. Either he's your father and you pay him that respect, or else you're not to come here. I know he's not easy to get along

with—nobody knows that better than me—but . . .

Willy [from the left, with a laugh]. Hey, hey, Biff!

Biff [starting to go out after WILLY]. What the hell is the matter with him?

[HAPPY stops him]

Linda. Don't—don't go near him!

Biff. Stop making excuses for him! He always, always wiped the floor with you. Never had an ounce of respect for you.

Happy. He's always had respect for—

Biff. What the hell do you know about it?

Happy [surlily]. Just don't call him crazy!

Biff. He's got no character—Charley wouldn't do this. Not in his own house—spewing out that vomit from his mind.

Happy. Charley never had to cope with what he's got to.

Biff. People are worse off than Willy Loman. Believe me, I've seen them!

Linda. Then make Charley your father, Biff. You can't do that, can you? I don't say he's a great man. Willy Loman never made a lot of money. His name was never in the paper. He's not the finest character that ever lived. But he's a human being, and a terrible thing is happening to him. So attention must be paid. He's not to be allowed to fall into his grave like an old dog. Attention, attention must be finally paid to such a person. You called him crazy—

Biff. I didn't mean—

Linda. No, a lot of people think he's lost his—balance. But you don't have to be very smart to know what his trouble is. The man is exhausted.

Happy. Sure!

Linda. A small man can be just as exhausted as a great man. He works for a company thirty-six years this March, opens up unheard-of territories to their trademark, and now in his old age they take his salary away.

Happy [indignantly]. I didn't know that, Mom.

Linda. You never asked, my dear! Now that you get your spending money someplace else you don't trouble your mind with him.

Happy. But I gave you money last—

Linda. Christmas time, fifty dollars! To fix the hot water it cost ninety-seven fifty! For five weeks he's been on straight com-

mission, like a beginner, an unknown! *Biff.* Those ungrateful bastards!

Linda. Are they any worse than his sons? When he brought them business, when he was young, they were glad to see him. But now his old friends, the old buyers that loved him so and always found some order to hand him in a pinch—they're all dead, retired. He used to be able to make six, seven calls a day in Boston. Now he takes his valises out of the car and puts them back and takes them out again and he's exhausted. Instead of walking he talks now. He drives seven hundred miles, and when he gets there no one knows him any more, no one welcomes him. And what goes through a man's mind, driving seven hundred miles home without having earned a cent? Why shouldn't he talk to himself? Why? When he has to go to Charley and borrow fifty dollars a week and pretend to me that it's his pay? How long can that go on? How long? You see what I'm sitting here and waiting for? And you tell me he has no character? The man who never worked a day but for your benefit? When does he get the medal for that? Is this his reward—to turn around at the age of sixty-three and find his sons, who he loved better than his life, one a philandering bum—

Happy. Mom!

Linda. That's all you are, my baby! [To BIFF] And you! What happened to the love you had for him? You were such pals! How you used to talk to him on the phone every night! How lonely he was till he could come home to you!

Biff. All right, Mom. I'll live here in my room, and I'll get a job. I'll keep away from him, that's all.

Linda. No, Biff. You can't stay here and fight all the time.

Biff. He threw me out of this house, remember that.

Linda. Why did he do that? I never knew why.

Biff. Because I know he's a fake and he doesn't like anybody around who knows!

Linda. Why a fake? In what way? What do you mean?

Biff. Just don't lay it all at my feet. It's between me and him—that's all I have to say. I'll chip in from now on. He'll settle for half my pay check. He'll be all right I'm going to bed.

[*He starts for the stairs*]

Linda. He won't be all right.

Biff [*turning on the stairs, furiously*]. I hate this city and I'll stay here. Now what do you want?

Linda. He's dying, Biff.

[*HAPPY turns quickly to her, shocked*]

Biff [*after a pause*]. Why is he dying?

Linda. He's been trying to kill himself.

Biff [*with great horror*]. How?

Linda. I live from day to day.

Biff. What're you talking about?

Linda. Remember I wrote you that he smashed up the car again? In February?

Biff. Well?

Linda. The insurance inspector came. He said that they have evidence. That all these accidents in the last year—weren't—weren't—accidents.

Happy. How can they tell that? That's a lie.

Linda. It seems there's a woman . . .

[*She takes a breath as*]

Biff [*sharply but contained*]. What woman?

Linda [*simultaneously*]. . . and this woman . . .

Linda. What?

Biff. Nothing. Go ahead.

Linda. What did you say?

Biff. Nothing. I just said what woman?

Happy. What about her?

Linda. Well, it seems she was walking down the road and saw his car. She says that he wasn't driving fast at all, and that he didn't skid. She says he came to that little bridge, and then deliberately smashed into the railing, and it was only the shallowness of the water that saved him.

Biff. Oh, no, he probably just fell asleep again.

Linda. I don't think he fell asleep.

Biff. Why not?

Linda. Last month . . . [*With great difficulty*] Oh, boys, it's so hard to say a thing like this! He's just a big stupid man to you, but I tell you there's more good in him than in many other people. [*She chokes, wipes her eyes*] I was looking for a fuse. The lights blew out, and I went down the cellar. And behind the fuse box—it happened to fall out—was a length of rubber pipe—just short.

Happy. No kidding?

Linda. There's a little attachment on the end of it. I knew right away. And sure

enough, on the bottom of the water heater there's a new little nipple on the gas pipe.

Happy [*angrily*]. That—jerk.

Biff. Did you have it taken off?

Linda. I'm—I'm ashamed to. How can I mention it to him? Every day I go down and take away that little rubber pipe. But, when he comes home, I put it back where it was. How can I insult him that way? I don't know what to do. I live from day to day, boys. I tell you, I know every thought in his mind. It sounds so old-fashioned and silly, but I tell you he put his whole life into you and you've turned your backs on him. [*She is bent over in the chair, weeping, her face in her hands*] Biff, I swear to God! Biff, his life is in your hands!

Happy [*to Biff*]. How do you like that damned fool!

Biff [*kissing her*]. All right, pal, all right. It's all settled now. I've been remiss. I know that, Mom. But now I'll stay, and I swear to you, I'll apply myself. [*Kneeling in front of her, in a fever of self-reproach*] It's just—you see, Mom, I don't fit in business. Not that I won't try. I'll try, and I'll make good.

Happy. Sure you will. The trouble with you in business was you never tried to please people.

Biff. I know, I—

Happy. Like when you worked for Harrison's. Bob Harrison said you were tops, and then you go and do some damn fool thing like whistling whole songs in the elevator like a comedian.

Biff [*against Happy*]. So what? I like to whistle sometimes.

Happy. You don't raise a guy to a responsible job who whistles in the elevator!

Linda. Well, don't argue about it now.

Happy. Like when you'd go off and swim in the middle of the day instead of taking the line around.

Biff [*his resentment rising*]. Well, don't you run off? You take off sometimes, don't you? On a nice summer day?

Happy. Yeah, but I cover myself!

Linda. Boys!

Happy. If I'm going to take a fade the boss can call any number where I'm supposed to be and they'll swear to him that I just left. I'll tell you something that I hate to say, Biff, but in the business world some of them think you're crazy.

Biff [*angered*]. Screw the business world!

Happy. All right, screw it! Great, but cover yourself!

Linda. Hap, Hap!

Biff. I don't care what they think! They've laughed at Dad for years, and you know why? Because we don't belong in this nuthouse of a city! We should be mixing cement on some open plain, or—or carpenters. A carpenter is allowed to whistle!

[*WILLY walks in from the entrance of the house, at left*]

Willy. Even your grandfather was better than a carpenter. [*Pause. They watch him*] You never grew up. Bernard does not whistle in the elevator, I assure you.

Biff [*as though to laugh WILLY out of it*]. Yeah, but you do, Pop.

Willy. I never in my life whistled in an elevator! And who in the business world thinks I'm crazy?

Biff. I didn't mean it like that, Pop. Now don't make a whole thing out of it, will ya?

Willy. Go back to the West! Be a carpenter, a cowboy, enjoy yourself!

Linda. Willy, he was just saying—

Willy. I heard what he said!

Happy [*trying to quiet WILLY*]. Hey, Pop, come on now . . .

Willy [*continuing over HAPPY'S line*]. They laugh at me heh? Go to Filene's, go to the Hub, go to Slattery's, Boston. Call out the name Willy Loman and see what happens! Big shot!

Biff. All right, Pop.

Willy. Big!

Biff. All right!

Willy. Why do you always insult me?

Biff. I didn't say a word. [*To LINDA*] Did I say a word?

Linda. He didn't say anything, Willy.

Willy [*going to the doorway of the living-room*]. All right, good night, good night.

Linda. Willy, dear, he just decided . . .

Willy [*to BIFF*]. If you get tired hanging around tomorrow, paint the ceiling I put up in the living-room.

Biff. I'm leaving early tomorrow.

Happy. He's going to see Bill Oliver, Pop.

Willy [*interestedly*]. Oliver? For what?

Biff [*with reserve, but trying, trying*]. He always said he'd stake me. I'd like to go into business, so maybe I can take him up on it.

Linda. Isn't that wonderful?

Willy. Don't interrupt. What's wonderful about it? There's fifty men in the City of New York who'd stake him. [*To BIFF*] Sporting goods?

Biff. I guess so. I know something about it and—

Willy. He knows something about it! You know sporting goods better than Spalding, for God's sake! How much is he giving you?

Biff. I don't know, I didn't even see him yet, but—

Willy. Then what're you talkin' about?

Biff [*getting angry*]. Well, all I said was I'm gonna see him, that's all!

Willy [*turning away*]. Ah, you're counting your chickens again.

Biff [*starting left for the stairs*]. Oh, Jesus, I'm going to sleep!

Willy [*calling after him*]. Don't curse in this house!

Biff [*turning*]. Since when did you get so clean?

Happy [*trying to stop them*]. Wait a . . .

Willy. Don't use that language to me! I won't have it!

Happy [*grabbing BIFF, shouts*]. Wait a minute! I got an idea. I got a feasible idea. Come here, Biff, let's talk this over now, let's talk some sense here. When I was down in Florida last time, I thought of a great idea to sell sporting goods. It just came back to me. You and I, Biff—we have a line, the Loman Line. We train a couple of weeks, and put on a couple of exhibitions, see?

Willy. That's an idea!

Happy. Wait! We form two basketball teams, see? Two water-polo teams. We play each other. It's a million dollars' worth of publicity. Two brothers, see? The Loman Brothers. Displays in the Royal Palms—all the hotels. And banners over the ring and the basketball court: "Loman Brothers." Baby, we could sell sporting goods!

Willy. That is a one-million-dollar idea!

Linda. Marvelous!

Biff. I'm in great shape as far as that's concerned.

Happy. And the beauty of it is, Biff, it wouldn't be like a business. We'd be out playin' ball again . . .

Biff [*enthused*]. Yeah, that's . . .

Willy. Million-dollar . . .

Happy. And you wouldn't get fed up

with it, Biff. It'd be the family again. There'd be the old honor, and comradeship, and if you wanted to go off for a swim or somethin'—well, you'd do it! Without some smart cooky gettin' up ahead of you!

Willy. Lick the world! You guys together could absolutely lick the civilized world.

Biff. I'll see Oliver tomorrow. Hap, if we could work that out . . .

Linda. Maybe things are beginning to—
Willy [*wildly enthused, to LINDA*]. Stop interrupting! [*To BIFF*] But don't wear sport jacket and slacks when you see Oliver.

Biff. No, I'll—

Willy. A business suit, and talk as little as possible, and don't crack any jokes.

Biff. He did like me. Always liked me.

Linda. He loved you!

Willy [*to LINDA*]. Will you stop! [*To BIFF*] Walk in very serious. You are not applying for a boy's job. Money is to pass. Be quiet, fine, and serious. Everybody likes a kidder, but nobody lends him money.

Happy. I'll try to get some myself, Biff. I'm sure I can.

Willy. I see great things for you kids, I think your troubles are over. But remember, start big and you'll end big. Ask for fifteen. How much you gonna ask for?

Biff. Gee, I don't know—

Willy. And don't say "Gee." "Gee" is a boy's word. A man walking in for fifteen thousand dollars does not say "Gee!"

Biff. Ten, I think, would be top though.

Willy. Don't be so modest. You always started too low. Walk in with a big laugh. Don't look worried. Start off with a couple of your good stories to lighten things up. It's not what you say, it's how you say it—because personality always wins the day.

Linda. Oliver always thought the highest of him—

Willy. Will you let me talk?

Biff. Don't yell at her, Pop, will ya?

Willy [*angrily*]. I was talking, wasn't I?

Biff. I don't like you yelling at her all the time, and I'm tellin' you, that's all.

Willy. What're you, takin' over this house?

Linda. Willy—

Willy [*turning on her*]. Don't take his side all the time, goddammit!

Biff [*furiously*]. Stop yelling at her!

Willy [*suddenly pulling on his cheek, beaten down, guilt ridden*]. Give my best

to Bill Oliver—he may remember me.

[*He exits through the living-room doorway*]

Linda [*her voice subdued*]. What'd you have to start that for? [*BIFF turns away*] You see how sweet he was as soon as you talked hopefully? [*She goes over to BIFF*] Come up and say good night to him. Don't let him go to bed that way.

Happy. Come on, Biff, let's buck him up.

Linda. Please, dear. Just say good night. It takes so little to make him happy. Come. [*She goes through the living-room doorway, calling upstairs from within the living-room*] Your pajamas are hanging in the bathroom, Willy!

Happy [*looking toward where LINDA went out*]. What a woman! They broke the mold when they made her. You know that, Biff?

Biff. He's off salary. My God, working on commission!

Happy. Well, let's face it: he's no hot-shot selling man. Except that sometimes, you have to admit, he's a sweet personality.

Biff [*deciding*]. Lend me ten bucks, will ya? I want to buy some new ties.

Happy. I'll take you to a place I know. Beautiful stuff. Wear one of my striped shirts tomorrow.

Biff. She got gray. Mom got awful old. Gee, I'm gonna go in to Oliver tomorrow and knock him for a—

Happy. Come on up. Tell that to Dad. Let's give him a whirl. Come on.

Biff [*steamed up*]. You know, with ten thousand bucks, boy!

Happy [*as they go into the living-room*]. That's the talk, Biff, that's the first time I've heard the old confidence out of you! [*From within the living-room, fading off*] You're gonna live with me, kid, and any babe you want just say the word . . .

[*The last lines are hardly heard. They are mounting the stairs to their parents' bedroom*]

Linda [*entering her bedroom and addressing WILLY, who is in the bathroom. She is straightening the bed for him*]. Can you do anything about the shower? It drips.

Willy [*from the bathroom*]. All of a sudden everything falls to pieces! Goddam plumbing, oughta be sued, those people. I hardly finished putting it in and the thing . . .

[*His words rumble off*]

Linda. I'm just wondering if Oliver will remember him. You think he might?

Willy [coming out of the bathroom in his pajamas]. Remember him? What's the matter with you, you crazy? If he'd've stayed with Oliver he'd be on top by now! Wait'll Oliver gets a look at him. You don't know the average caliber any more. The average young man today—*[He is getting into bed]*—is got a caliber of zero. Greatest thing in the world for him was to bum around.

[BIFF and HAPPY enter the bedroom. Slight pause]

Willy [stops short, looking at BIFF]. Glad to hear it, boy.

Happy. He wanted to say good night to you, sport.

Willy [to BIFF]. Yeah. Knock him dead, boy. What'd you want to tell me?

Biff. Just take it easy, Pop. Good night. *[He turns to go]*

Willy [unable to resist]. And if anything falls off the desk while you're talking to him—like a package or something—don't you pick it up. They have office boys for that.

Linda. I'll make a big breakfast—

Willy. Will you let me finish? *[To BIFF]* Tell him you were in the business in the West. Not farm work.

Biff. All right, Dad.

Linda. I think everything—

Willy [going right through her speech]. And don't undersell yourself. No less than fifteen thousand dollars.

Biff [unable to bear him]. Okay. Good night, Mom.

[He starts moving]

Willy. Because you got a greatness in you, Biff, remember that. You got all kinds a greatness . . .

[He lies back, exhausted. BIFF walks out]

Linda [calling after BIFF]. Sleep well, darling!

Happy. I'm gonna get married, Mom. I wanted to tell you.

Linda. Go to sleep, dear.

Happy [going]. I just wanted to tell you.

Willy. Keep up the good work. *[HAPPY exits]* God . . . remember that Ebbets Field game? The championship of the city?

Linda. Just rest. Should I sing to you?

Willy. Yeah. Sing to me. *[LINDA hums a soft lullaby]* When that team came

out—he was the tallest, remember?

Linda. Oh, yes. And in gold.

[BIFF enters the darkened kitchen, takes a cigarette, and leaves the house. He comes downstage into a golden pool of light. He smokes, staring at the night]

Willy. Like a young god. Hercules—something like that. And the sun, the sun all around him. Remember how he waved to me? Right up from the field, with the representatives of three colleges standing by? And the buyers I brought, and the cheers when he came out—Loman, Loman, Loman! God Almighty, he'll be great yet. A star like that, magnificent, can never really fade away!

[The light on WILLY is fading. The gas heater begins to glow through the kitchen wall, near the stairs, a blue flame beneath red coils]

Linda [timidly]. Willy dear, what has he got against you?

Willy. I'm so tired. Don't talk any more.

[BIFF slowly returns to the kitchen. He stops, stares toward the heater]

Linda. Will you ask Howard to let you work in New York?

Willy. First thing in the morning. Everything'll be all right.

[BIFF reaches behind the heater and draws out a length of rubber tubing. He is horrified and turns his head toward WILLY'S room, still dimly lit, from which the strains of LINDA'S desperate but monotonous humming rise]

Willy [staring through the window into the moonlight]. Gee, look at the moon moving between the buildings!

[BIFF wraps the tubing around his hand and quickly goes up the stairs]

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

Music is heard, gay and bright. The curtain rises as the music fades away. WILLY, in shirt sleeves, is sitting at the kitchen table, sipping coffee, his hat in his lap. LINDA is filling his cup when she can.

Willy. Wonderful coffee. Meal in itself.

Linda. Can I make you some eggs?

Willy. No. Take a breath.

Linda. You look so rested, dear.

Willy. I slept like a dead one. First time in months. Imagine, sleeping till ten on a Tuesday morning. Boys left nice and early, heh?

Linda. They were out of here by eight o'clock.

Willy. Good work!

Linda. It was so thrilling to see them leaving together. I can't get over the shaving lotion in this house!

Willy [smiling]. Mmm—

Linda. Biff was very changed this morning. His whole attitude seemed to be hopeful. He couldn't wait to get downtown to see Oliver.

Willy. He's heading for a change. There's no question, there simply are certain men that take longer to get—solidified. How did he dress?

Linda. His blue suit. He's so handsome in that suit. He could be a—anything in that suit!

[WILLY gets up from the table. LINDA holds his jacket for him]

Willy. There's no question, no question at all. Gee, on the way home tonight I'd like to buy some seeds.

Linda [laughing]. That'd be wonderful. But not enough sun gets back there. Nothing'll grow any more.

Willy. You wait, kid, before it's all over we're gonna get a little place out in the country, and I'll raise some vegetables, a couple of chickens . . .

Linda. You'll do it yet, dear.

[WILLY walks out of his jacket. LINDA follows him]

Willy. And they'll get married, and come for a weekend. I'd build a little guest house. 'Cause I got so many fine tools, all I'd need would be a little lumber and some peace of mind.

Linda [joyfully]. I sewed the lining . . .

Willy. I could build two guest houses, so they'd both come. Did he decide how much he's going to ask Oliver for?

Linda [getting him into the jacket]. He didn't mention it, but I imagine ten or fifteen thousand. You going to talk to Howard today?

Willy. Yeah. I'll put it to him straight and simple. He'll just have to take me off the road.

Linda. And Willy, don't forget to ask for a little advance, because we've got the insurance premium. It's the grace period now.

Willy. That's a hundred . . . ?

Linda. A hundred and eight, sixty-eight. Because we're a little short again.

Willy. Why are we short?

Linda. Well, you had the motor job on the car . . .

Willy. That goddam Studebaker!

Linda. And you got one more payment on the refrigerator . . .

Willy. But it just broke again!

Linda. Well, it's old, dear.

Willy. I told you we should've bought a well-advertised machine. Charley bought a General Electric and it's twenty years old and it's still good, that son-of-a-bitch.

Linda. But, Willy—

Willy. Whoever heard of a Hastings refrigerator? Once in my life I would like to own something outright before it's broken! I'm always in a race with the junkyard! I just finished paying for the car and it's on its last legs. The refrigerator consumes belts like a goddam maniac. They time those things. They time them so when you finally paid for them, they're used up.

Linda [buttoning up his jacket as he unbuttons it]. All told, about two hundred dollars would carry us, dear. But that includes the last payment on the mortgage. After this payment, Willy, the house belongs to us.

Willy. It's twenty-five years!

Linda. Biff was nine years old when we bought it.

Willy. Well, that's a great thing. To weather a twenty-five year mortgage is—

Linda. It's an accomplishment.

Willy. All the cement, the lumber, the reconstruction I put in this house! There ain't a crack to be found in it any more.

Linda. Well, it served its purpose.

Willy. What purpose? Some stranger'll come along, move in, and that's that. If only Biff would take this house, and raise a family . . . [He starts to go] Good-by, I'm late.

Linda [suddenly remembering]. Oh, I forgot! You're supposed to meet them for dinner.

Willy. Me?

Linda. At Frank's Chop House on Forty-eighth near Sixth Avenue.

Willy. Is that so! How about you?

Linda. No, just the three of you. They're gonna blow you to a big meal!

Willy. Don't say! Who thought of that?

Linda. Biff came to me this morning, Willy, and he said, "Tell Dad, we want to blow him to a big meal." Be there six o'clock. You and your two boys are going to have dinner.

Willy. Gee whiz! That's really something! I'm gonna knock Howard for a loop, kid. I'll get an advance, and I'll come home with a New York job. Goddammit, now I'm gonna do it!

Linda. Oh, that's the spirit, Willy!

Willy. I will never get behind a wheel the rest of my life!

Linda. It's changing, Willy, I can feel it changing!

Willy. Beyond a question. G'by, I'm late.

[*He starts to go again*]

Linda [*calling after him as she runs to the kitchen table for a handkerchief*]. You got your glasses?

Willy [*feels for them, then comes back in*]. Yeah, yeah, got my glasses.

Linda [*giving him the handkerchief*]. And a handkerchief.

Willy. Yeah, handkerchief.

Linda. And your saccharine?

Willy. Yeah, my saccharine.

Linda. Be careful on the subway stairs.

[*She kisses him, and a silk stocking is seen hanging from her hand. WILLY notices it*]

Willy. Will you stop mending stockings? At least while I'm in the house. It gets me nervous. I can't tell you. Please.

[*LINDA hides the stocking in her hand as she follows WILLY across the forestage in front of the house*]

Linda. Remember, Frank's Chop House.

Willy [*passing the apron*]. Maybe beets would grow out there.

Linda [*laughing*]. But you tried so many times.

Willy. Yeah. Well, don't work hard today.

[*He disappears around the right corner of the house*]

Linda. Be careful!

[*As WILLY vanishes, LINDA waves to him. Suddenly the phone rings. She runs across the stage and into the kitchen and lifts it*]

Linda. Hello? Oh, Biff! I'm so glad you called, I just . . . Yes, sure, I just told him. Yes, he'll be there for dinner at six o'clock, I didn't forget. Listen, I was just dying to

tell you. You know that little rubber pipe I told you about? That he connected to the gas heater? I finally decided to go down the cellar this morning and take it away and destroy it. But it's gone! Imagine? He took it away himself, it isn't there! [*She listens*] When? Oh, then you took it. Oh—nothing, it's just that I'd hoped he'd taken it away himself. Oh, I'm not worried, darling, because this morning he left in such high spirits, it was like the old days! I'm not afraid any more. Did Mr. Oliver see you? . . . Well, you wait there then. And make a nice impression on him, darling. Just don't perspire too much before you see him. And have a nice time with Dad. He may have big news too! . . . That's right, a New York job. And be sweet to him tonight, dear. Be loving to him. Because he's only a little boat looking for a harbor. [*She is trembling with sorrow and joy*] Oh, that's wonderful, Biff, you'll save his life. Thanks, darling. Just put your arm around him when he comes into the restaurant. Give him a smile. That's the boy . . . Good-by, dear. . . . You got your comb? . . . That's fine. Good-by, Biff dear.

[*In the middle of her speech, HOWARD WAGNER, thirty-six, wheels on a small typewriter table on which is a wire-recording machine and proceeds to plug it in. This is on the left forestage. Light slowly fades on LINDA as it rises on HOWARD. HOWARD is intent on threading the machine and only glances over his shoulder as WILLY appears*]

Willy. Pst! Pst!

Howard. Hello, Willy, come in.

Willy. Like to have a little talk with you, Howard.

Howard. Sorry to keep you waiting. I'll be with you in a minute.

Willy. What's that, Howard?

Howard. Didn't you ever see one of these? Wire recorder.

Willy. Oh. Can we talk a minute?

Howard. Records things. Just got delivery yesterday. Been driving me crazy, the most terrific machine I ever saw in my life. I was up all night with it.

Willy. What do you do with it?

Howard. I bought it for dictation, but you can do anything with it. Listen to this. I had it home last night. Listen to what

I picked up. The first one is my daughter. Get this. [*He flicks the switch and "Roll out the Barrel" is heard being whistled*] Listen to that kid whistle.

Willy. That is lifelike, isn't it?

Howard. Seven years old. Get that tone.

Willy. Ts, ts. Like to ask a little favor if you . . .

[*The whistling breaks off, and the voice of Howard's daughter is heard*]

His Daughter. "Now you, Daddy."

Howard. She's crazy for me! [*Again the same song is whistled*] That's me! Ha!

[*He winks*]

Willy. You're very good!

[*The whistling breaks off again. The machine runs silent for a moment*]

Howard. Sh! Get this now, this is my son.

His Son. "The capital of Alabama is Montgomery; the capital of Arizona is Phoenix; the capital of Arkansas is Little Rock; the capital of California is Sacramento . . ."

[*And on, and on*]

Howard [*holding up five fingers*]. Five years old, Willy!

Willy. He'll make an announcer some day!

His Son [*continuing*]. "The capital . . ."

Howard. Get that—alphabetical order!

[*The machine breaks off suddenly*] Wait a minute. The maid kicked the plug out.

Willy. It certainly is a—

Howard. Sh, for God's sake!

His Son. "It's nine o'clock, Bulova watch time. So I have to go to sleep."

Willy. That really is—

Howard. Wait a minute! The next is my wife.

[*They wait*]

Howard's Voice. "Go on, say something." [*Pause*] "Well, you gonna talk?"

His Wife. "I can't think of anything."

Howard's Voice. "Well, talk—it's turning."

His Wife [*shyly, beaten*]. "Hello." [*Silence*] "Oh, Howard, I can't talk into this . . ."

Howard [*snapping the machine off*]. That was my wife.

Willy. That is a wonderful machine. Can we—

Howard. I tell you, Willy, I'm gonna take my camera, and my bandsaw, and all my

hobbies, and out they go. This is the most fascinating relaxation I ever found.

Willy. I think I'll get one myself.

Howard. Sure, they're only a hundred and a half. You can't do without it. Supposing you wanna hear Jack Benny, see? But you can't be at home at that hour. So you tell the maid to turn the radio on when Jack Benny comes on, and this automatically goes on with the radio . . .

Willy. And when you come home you . . .

Howard. You can come home twelve o'clock, one o'clock, any time you like, and you get yourself a Coke and sit yourself down, throw the switch, and there's Jack Benny's program in the middle of the night!

Willy. I'm definitely going to get one. Because lots of time I'm on the road, and I think to myself, what I must be missing on the radio!

Howard. Don't you have a radio in the car?

Willy. Well, yeah, but who ever thinks of turning it on?

Howard. Say, aren't you supposed to be in Boston?

Willy. That's what I want to talk to you about, Howard. You got a minute?

[*He draws a chair in from the wing*]

Howard. What happened? What're you doing here?

Willy. Well . . .

Howard. You didn't crack up again, did you?

Willy. Oh, no. No . . .

Howard. Geez, you had me worried there for a minute. What's the trouble?

Willy. Well, tell you the truth, Howard. I've come to the decision that I'd rather not travel any more.

Howard. Not travel! Well, what'll you do?

Willy. Remember. Christmas time, when you had the party here? You said you'd try to think of some spot for me here in town.

Howard. With us?

Willy. Well, sure.

Howard. Oh, yeah, yeah. I remember. Well, I couldn't think of anything for you, Willy.

Willy. I tell ya, Howard. The kids are all grown up, y'know. I don't need much any more. If I could take home—well, sixty-five dollars a week, I could swing it.

Howard. Yeah, but Willy, see I—

Willy. I tell ya why, Howard. Speaking frankly and between the two of us, y'know—I'm just a little tired.

Howard. Oh, I could understand that, Willy. But you're a road man, Willy, and we do a road business. We've only got a half-dozen salesmen on the floor here.

Willy. God knows, Howard, I never asked a favor of any man. But I was with the firm when your father used to carry you in here in his arms.

Howard. I know that, Willy, but—

Willy. Your father came to me the day you were born and asked me what I thought of the name of Howard, may he rest in peace.

Howard. I appreciate that, Willy, but there just is no spot here for you. If I had a spot I'd slam you right in, but I just don't have a single solitary spot.

[He looks for his lighter. WILLY has picked it up and gives it to him. Pause]

Willy [with increasing anger]. Howard, all I need to set my table is fifty dollars a week.

Howard. But where am I going to put you, kid?

Willy. Look, it isn't a question of whether I can sell merchandise, is it?

Howard. No, but it's a business, kid, and everybody's gotta pull his own weight.

Willy [desperately]. Just let me tell you a story, Howard—

Howard. 'Cause you gotta admit, business is business.

Willy [angrily]. Business is definitely business, but just listen for a minute. You don't understand this. When I was a boy—eighteen, nineteen—I was already on the road. And there was a question in my mind as to whether selling had a future for me. Because in those days I had a yearning to go to Alaska. See, there were three gold strikes in one month in Alaska, and I felt like going out. Just for the ride, you might say.

Howard [barely interested]. Don't say.

Willy. Oh, yeah, my father lived many years in Alaska. He was an adventurous man. We've got quite a little streak of self-reliance in our family. I thought I'd go out with my older brother and try to locate him, and maybe settle in the North with the old man. And I was almost decided to go,

when I met a salesman in the Parker House. His name was Dave Singleman. And he was eighty-four years old, and he'd drummed merchandise in thirty-one states. And old Dave, he'd go up to his room, y'understand, put on his green velvet slippers—I'll never forget—and pick up his phone and call the buyers, and without ever leaving his room, at the age of eighty-four, he made his living. And when I saw that, I realized that selling was the greatest career a man could want. 'Cause what could be more satisfying than to be able to go, at the age of eighty-four, into twenty or thirty different cities, and pick up a phone, and be remembered and loved and helped by so many different people? Do you know? when he died—and by the way he died the death of a salesman, in his green velvet slippers in the smoker of the New York, New Haven and Hartford, going into Boston—when he died, hundreds of salesmen and buyers were at his funeral. Things were sad on a lotta trains for months after that. [He stands up. Howard has not looked at him] In those days there was personality in it, Howard. There was respect, and comradeship, and gratitude in it. Today, it's all cut and dried, and there's no chance for bringing friendship to bear—or personality. You see what I mean? They don't know me any more.

Howard [moving away, to the right]. That's just the thing, Willy.

Willy. If I had forty dollars a week—that's all I'd need. Forty dollars, Howard.

Howard. Kid, I can't take blood from a stone, I—

Willy [desperation is on him now]. Howard, the year Al Smith was nominated, your father came to me and—

Howard [starting to go off]. I've got to see some people, kid.

Willy [stopping him]. I'm talking about your father! There were promises made across this desk! You mustn't tell me you've got people to see—I put thirty-four years into this firm, Howard, and now I can't pay my insurance! You can't eat the orange and throw the peel away—a man is not a piece of fruit! [After a pause] Now pay attention. Your father—in 1923 I had a big year. I averaged a hundred and seventy dollars a week in commissions.

Howard [impatiently]. Now, Willy, you never averaged—

Willy [banging his hand on the desk]. I

averaged a hundred and seventy dollars a week in the year of 1928! And your father came to me—or rather, I was in the office here—it was right over this desk—and he put his hand on my shoulder—

Howard [*getting up*]. You'll have to excuse me, Willy, I gotta see some people. Pull yourself together. [*Going out*] I'll be back in a little while.

[*On HOWARD'S exit, the light on his chair grows very bright and strange*]

Willy. Pull myself together! What the hell did I say to him? My God, I was yelling at him! How could I! [*WILLY breaks off, staring at the light, which occupies the chair, animating it. He approaches this chair, standing across the desk from it*] Frank, Frank, don't you remember what you told me that time? How you put your hand on my shoulder, and Frank . . .

[*He leans on the desk and as he speaks the dead man's name he accidentally switches on the recorder, and instantly*]

Howard's Son. ". . . of New York is Albany. The capital of Ohio is Cincinnati, the capital of Rhode Island is . . ."

[*The recitation continues*]

Willy [*leaping away with fright, shouting*]. Ha! Howard! Howard! Howard!

Howard [*rushing in*]. What happened?

Willy [*pointing at the machine, which continues nasally, childishly, with the capital cities*]. Shut it off! Shut it off!

Howard [*pulling the plug out*]. Look, Willy . . .

Willy [*pressing his hands to his eyes*]. I gotta get myself some coffee. I'll get some coffee . . .

[*WILLY starts to walk out. HOWARD stops him*]

Howard [*rolling up the cord*]. Willy, look . . .

Willy. I'll go to Boston.

Howard. Willy, you can't go to Boston for us.

Willy. Why can't I go?

Howard. I don't want you to represent us. I've been meaning to tell you for a long time now.

Willy. Howard, are you firing me?

Howard. I think you need a good long rest, Willy.

Willy. Howard—

Howard. And when you feel better, come

back, and we'll see if we can work something out.

Willy. But I gotta earn money, Howard. I'm in no position to—

Howard. Where are your sons? Why don't your sons give you a hand?

Willy. They're working on a very big deal.

Howard. This is no time for false pride, Willy. You go to your sons and you tell them that you're tired. You've got two great boys, haven't you?

Willy. Oh, no question, no question, but in the meantime . . .

Howard. Then that's that, heh?

Willy. All right, I'll go to Boston tomorrow.

Howard. No, no.

Willy. I can't throw myself on my sons. I'm not a cripple!

Howard. Look, kid, I'm busy this morning.

Willy [*grasping HOWARD'S arm*]. Howard, you've got to let me go to Boston!

Howard [*hard, keeping himself under control*]. I've got a line of people to see this morning. Sit down, take five minutes, and pull yourself together, and then go home, will ya? I need the office, Willy. [*He starts to go, turns, remembering the recorder, starts to push off the table holding the recorder*] Oh, yeah. Whenever you can this week, stop by and drop off the samples. You'll feel better, Willy, and then come back and we'll talk. Pull yourself together, kid, there's people outside.

[*HOWARD exits, pushing the table off left. WILLY stares into space, exhausted. Now the music is heard—BEN'S music—first distantly, then closer, closer. As WILLY speaks, BEN enters from the right. He carries valise and umbrella*]

Willy. Oh, Ben, how did you do it? What is the answer? Did you wind up the Alaska deal already?

Ben. Doesn't take much time if you know what you're doing. Just a short business trip. Boarding ship in an hour. Wanted to say good-by.

Willy. Ben, I've got to talk to you.

Ben [*glancing at his watch*]. Haven't the time, William.

Willy [*crossing the apron to BEN*]. Ben, nothing's working out. I don't know what to do.

Ben. Now, look here, William. I've bought timberland in Alaska and I need a man to look after things for me.

Willy. God, timberland! Me and my boys in those grand outdoors!

Ben. You've a new continent at your doorstep, William. Get out of these cities, they're full of talk and time payments and courts of law. Screw on your fists and you can fight for a fortune up there.

Willy. Yes, yes! Linda, Linda!

[*LINDA enters as of old, with the wash*]

Linda. Oh, you're back?

Ben. I haven't much time.

Willy. No, wait! Linda, he's got a proposition for me in Alaska.

Linda. But you've got—[*To BEN*] He's got a beautiful job here.

Willy. But in Alaska, kid, I could—

Linda. You're doing well enough, Willy!

Ben [*to LINDA*]. Enough for what, my dear?

Linda [*frightened of BEN and angry at him*]. Don't say those things to him! Enough to be happy right here, right now. [*To WILLY, while BEN laughs*] Why must everybody conquer the world? You're well liked, and the boys love you, and someday—[*To BEN*—why, old man Wagner told him just the other day that if he keeps it up he'll be a member of the firm, didn't he, Willy?

Willy. Sure, sure. I am building something with this firm, Ben, and if a man is building something he must be on the right track, mustn't he?

Ben. What are you building? Lay your hand on it. Where is it?

Willy [*hesitantly*]. That's true, Linda, there's nothing.

Linda. Why? [*To BEN*] There's a man eighty-four years old—

Willy. That's right, Ben, that's right. When I look at that man I say, what is there to worry about?

Ben. Bah!

Willy. It's true, Ben. All he has to do is go into any city, pick up the phone, and he's making his living and you know why?

Ben [*picking up his valise*]. I've got to go.

Willy [*holding BEN back*]. Look at this boy!

[*BIFF, in his high school sweater, enters carrying suitcase. HAPPY carries*

BIFF's shoulder guards, gold helmet, and football pants]

Willy. Without a penny to his name, three great universities are begging for him, and from there the sky's the limit, because it's not what you do, Ben. It's who you know and the smile on your face! It's contacts, Ben, contacts! The whole wealth of Alaska passes over the lunch table at the Commodore Hotel, and that's the wonder, the wonder of this country, that a man can end with diamonds here on the basis of being liked! [*He turns to BIFF*] And that's why when you get out on that field today it's important. Because thousands of people will be rooting for you and loving you. [*To BEN, who has again begun to leave*] And Ben! when he walks into a business office his name will sound out like a bell and all the doors will open to him! I've seen it, Ben, I've seen it a thousand times! You can't feel it with your hand like timber, but it's there!

Ben. Good-by, William.

Willy. Ben, am I right? Don't you think I'm right? I value your advice.

Ben. There's a new continent at your doorstep, William. You could walk out rich. Rich!

[*He is gone*]

Willy. We'll do it here, Ben! You hear me? We're gonna do it here!

[*Young BERNARD rushes in. The gay music of the Boys is heard*]

Bernard. Oh, gee, I was afraid you left already!

Willy. Why? What time is it?

Bernard. It's half-past one!

Willy. Well, come on, everybody! Eb-bets Field next stop! Where's the pen-nants?

[*He rushes through the wall-line of the kitchen and out into the living-room*]

Linda [*to BIFF*]. Did you pack fresh underwear?

Biff [*who has been limbering up*]. I want to go!

Bernard. Biff, I'm carrying your helmet, ain't I?

Happy. No, I'm carrying the helmet.

Bernard. Oh, Biff, you promised me.

Happy. I'm carrying the helmet.

Bernard. How am I going to get in the locker room?

Linda. Let him carry the shoulder guards.

[*She puts her coat and hat on in the kitchen*]

Bernard. Can I, Biff? 'Cause I told everybody I'm going to be in the locker room.

Happy. In Ebbets Field it's the clubhouse.

Bernard. I meant the clubhouse. Biff!

Happy. Biff!

Biff [*grandly, after a slight pause*]. Let him carry the shoulder guards.

Happy [*as he gives BERNARD the shoulder guards*]. Stay close to us now.

[*WILLY rushes in with the pennants*]

Willy [*handing them out*]. Everybody wave when Biff comes out on the field. [*HAPPY and BERNARD run off*] You set now, boy?

[*The music has died away*]

Biff. Ready to go, Pop. Every muscle is ready.

Willy [*at the edge of the apron*]. You realize what this means?

Biff. That's right, Pop.

Willy [*feeling BIFF's muscles*]. You're comin' home this afternoon captain of the All-Scholastic Championship Team of the City of New York.

Biff. I got it, Pop. And remember, pal, when I take off my helmet, that touchdown is for you.

Willy. Let's go! [*He is starting out, with his arm around BIFF, when CHARLEY enters, as of old, in knickers*] I got no room for you, Charley.

Charley. Room? For what?

Willy. In the car.

Charley. You goin' for a ride? I wanted to shoot some casino.

Willy [*furiously*]. Casino! [*Incredulously*] Don't you realize what today is?

Linda. Oh, he knows, Willy. He's just kidding you.

Willy. That's nothing to kid about!

Charley. No, Linda, what's goin' on?

Linda. He's playing in Ebbets Field.

Charley. Baseball in this weather?

Willy. Don't talk to him. Come on, come on!

[*He is pushing them out*]

Charley. Wait a minute, didn't you hear the news?

Willy. What?

Charley. Don't you listen to the radio? Ebbets Field just blew up.

Willy. You go to hell! [*CHARLEY laughs.*]

[*Pushing them out*] Come on, come on! We're late.

Charley [*as they go*]. Knock a homer, Biff, knock a homer!

Willy [*the last to leave, turning to CHARLEY*]. I don't think that was funny, Charley. This is the greatest day of his life.

Charley. Willy, when are you going to grow up?

Willy. Yeah, heh? When this game is over, Charley, you'll be laughing out of the other side of your face. They'll be calling him another Red Grange. Twenty-five thousand a year.

Charley [*kidding*]. Is that so?

Willy. Yeah, that's so.

Charley. Well, then, I'm sorry, Willy. But tell me something.

Willy. What?

Charley. Who is Red Grange?

Willy. Put up your hands. Goddam you, put up your hands!

[*CHARLEY, chuckling, shakes his head and walks away, around the left corner of the stage. WILLY follows him.*]

[*The music rises to a mocking frenzy*]

Willy. Who the hell do you think you are, better than everybody else? You don't know everything, you big, ignorant, stupid . . . Put up your hands!

[*Light rises, on the right side of the forestage, on a small table in the reception room of CHARLEY's office. Traffic sounds are heard. BERNARD, now mature, sits whistling to himself. A pair of tennis rackets and an overnight bag are on the floor beside him*]

Willy [*offstage*]. What are you walking away for? Don't walk away! If you're going to say something say it to my face! I know you laugh at me behind my back. You'll laugh out of the other side of your goddam face after this game. Touchdown! Touchdown! Eighty thousand people! Touchdown! Right between the goal posts.

[*BERNARD is a quiet, earnest, but self-assured young man. WILLY's voice is coming from right upstage now. BERNARD lowers his feet off the table and listens. JENNY, his father's secretary, enters*]

Jenny [*distressed*]. Say, Bernard, will you go out in the hall?

Bernard. What is that noise? Who is it?

Jenny. Mr. Loman. He just got off the elevator.

Bernard [*getting up*]. Who's he arguing with?

Jenny. Nobody. There's nobody with him. I can't deal with him any more, and your father gets all upset everytime he comes. I've got a lot of typing to do, and your father's waiting to sign it. Will you see him?

Willy [*entering*]. Touchdown! Touch—[*He sees JENNY*] Jenny, Jenny, good to see you. How're ya? Workin'? Or still honest?

Jenny. Fine. How've you been feeling?

Willy. Not much any more, Jenny. Ha, ha!

[*He is surprised to see the rackets*]

Bernard. Hello, Uncle Willy.

Willy [*almost shocked*]. Bernard! Well, look who's here!

[*He comes quickly, guiltily, to BERNARD and warmly shakes his hand*]

Bernard. How are you? Good to see you.

Willy. What are you doing here?

Bernard. Oh, just stopped by to see Pop. Get off my feet till my train leaves. I'm going to Washington in a few minutes.

Willy. Is he in?

Bernard. Yes, he's in his office with the accountant. Sit down.

Willy [*sitting down*]. What're you going to do in Washington?

Bernard. Oh, just a case I've got there, Willy.

Willy. That so? [*Indicating the rackets*] You going to play tennis there?

Bernard. I'm staying with a friend who's got a court.

Willy. Don't say. His own tennis court. Must be fine people, I bet.

Bernard. They are, very nice. Dad tells me Biff's in town.

Willy [*with a big smile*]. Yeah, Biff's in. Working on a very big deal, Bernard.

Bernard. What's Biff doing?

Willy. Well, he's been doing very big things in the West. But he decided to establish himself here. Very big. We're having dinner. Did I hear your wife had a boy?

Bernard. That's right. Our second.

Willy. Two boys! What do you know!

Bernard. What kind of a deal has Biff got?

Willy. Well, Bill Oliver—very big sporting-goods man—he wants Biff very badly.

Called him in from the West. Long distance, carte blanche, special deliveries. Your friends have their own private tennis court?

Bernard. You still with the old firm, Willy?

Willy [*after a pause*]. I'm—I'm overjoyed to see how you made the grade, Bernard, overjoyed. It's an encouraging thing to see a young man really—really—Looks very good for Biff—very—[*He breaks off, then*] Bernard—

[*He is so full of emotion, he breaks off again*]

Bernard. What is it, Willy?

Willy [*small and alone*]. What—what's the secret?

Bernard. What secret?

Willy. How—how did you? Why didn't he ever catch on?

Bernard. I wouldn't know that, Willy.

Willy [*confidentially, desperately*]. You were his friend, his boyhood friend. There's something I don't understand about it. His life ended after that Ebbets Field game. From the age of seventeen nothing good ever happened to him.

Bernard. He never trained himself for anything.

Willy. But he did, he did. After high school he took so many correspondence courses. Radio mechanics; television; God knows what, and never made the slightest mark.

Bernard [*taking off his glasses*]. Willy, do you want to talk candidly?

Willy [*rising, faces BERNARD*]. I regard you as a very brilliant man, Bernard. I value your advice.

Bernard. Oh, the hell with the advice, Willy. I couldn't advise you. There's just one thing I've always wanted to ask you. When he was supposed to graduate, and the math teacher flunked him—

Willy. Oh, that son-of-a-bitch ruined his life.

Bernard. Yeah, but, Willy, all he had to do was go to summer school and make up that subject.

Willy. That's right, that's right.

Bernard. Did you tell him not to go to summer school?

Willy. Me? I begged him to go. I ordered him to go!

Bernard. Then why wouldn't he go?

Willy. Why? Why! Bernard, that ques-

tion has been trailing me like a ghost for the last fifteen years. He flunked the subject, and laid down and died like a hammer hit him!

Bernard. Take it easy, kid.

Willy. Let me talk to you—I got nobody to talk to. Bernard, Bernard, was it my fault? Y’see? It keeps going around in my mind, maybe I did something to him. I got nothing to give him.

Bernard. Don’t take it so hard.

Willy. Why did he lay down? What is the story there? You were his friend!

Bernard. Willy, I remember, it was June, and our grades came out. And he’d flunked math.

Willy. That son-of-a-bitch!

Bernard. No, it wasn’t right then. Biff just got very angry, I remember, and he was ready to enroll in summer school.

Willy [surprised]. He was?

Bernard. He wasn’t beaten by it at all. But then, Willy, he disappeared from the block for almost a month. And I got the idea that he’d gone up to New England to see you. Did he have a talk with you then?

[WILLY stares in silence]

Bernard. Willy?

Willy [with a strong edge of resentment in his voice]. Yeah, he came to Boston. What about it?

Bernard. Well, just that when he came back—I’ll never forget this, it always mystifies me. Because I’d thought so well of Biff, even though he’d always taken advantage of me. I loved him, Willy, y’know? And he came back after that month and took his sneakers—remember those sneakers with “University of Virginia” printed on them? He was so proud of those, wore them every day. And he took them down in the cellar, and burned them up in the furnace. We had a fist fight. It lasted at least half an hour. Just the two of us, punching each other down the cellar, and crying right through it. I’ve often thought of how strange it was that I knew he’d given up his life. What happened in Boston, Willy?

[WILLY looks at him as at an intruder]

Bernard. I just bring it up because you asked me.

Willy [angrily]. Nothing. What do you mean, “What happened?” What’s that got to do with anything?

Bernard. Well, don’t get sore.

Willy. What are you trying to do, blame

it on me? If a boy lays down is that my fault?

Bernard. Now, Willy, don’t get—

Willy. Well, don’t—don’t talk to me that way! What does that mean, “What happened?”

[CHARLEY enters. He is in his vest, and he carries a bottle of bourbon]

Charley. Hey, you’re going to miss that train.

[He waves the bottle]

Bernard. Yeah, I’m going. [He takes the bottle] Thanks, Pop. [He picks up his rackets and bag] Good-by, Willy, and don’t worry about it. You know, “If at first you don’t succeed . . .”

Willy. Yes, I believe in that.

Bernard. But sometimes, Willy, it’s better for a man just to walk away.

Willy. Walk away?

Bernard. That’s right.

Willy. But if you can’t walk away?

Bernard [after a slight pause]. I guess that’s when it’s tough. [Extending his hand] Good-by, Willy.

Willy [shaking BERNARD’S hand]. Good-by, boy.

Charley [an arm on BERNARD’S shoulder]. How do you like this kid? Gonna argue a case in front of the Supreme Court.

Bernard [protesting]. Pop!

Willy [genuinely shocked, pained, and happy]. No! The Supreme Court!

Bernard. I gotta run. ‘By, Dad!

Charley. Knock ‘em dead, Bernard!

[BERNARD goes off]

Willy [as CHARLEY takes out his wallet]. The Supreme Court! And he didn’t even mention it!

Charley [counting out money on the desk]. He don’t have to—he’s gonna do it.

Willy. And you never told him what to do, did you? You never took any interest in him.

Charley. My salvation is that I never took any interest in anything. There’s some money—fifty dollars. I got an accountant inside.

Willy. Charley, look . . . [With difficulty] I got my insurance to pay. If you can manage it—I need a hundred and ten dollars.

[CHARLEY doesn’t reply for a moment; merely stops moving]

Willy. I’d draw it from my bank but Linda would know, and I . . .

Charley. Sit down, Willy.

Willy [*moving toward the chair*]. I'm keeping an account of everything, remember. I'll pay every penny back.

[*He sits*]

Charley. Now listen to me, Willy.

Willy. I want you to know I appreciate . . .

Charley [*sitting down on the table*]. Willy, what're you doin'? What the hell is goin' on in your head?

Willy. Why? I'm simply . . .

Charley. I offered you a job. You can make fifty dollars a week. And I won't send you on the road.

Willy. I've got a job.

Charley. Without pay? What kind of a job is a job without pay? [*He rises*] Now, look, kid, enough is enough. I'm no genius but I know when I'm being insulted.

Willy. Insulted!

Charley. Why don't you want to work for me?

Willy. What's the matter with you? I've got a job.

Charley. Then what're you walkin' in here every week for?

Willy [*getting up*]. Well, if you don't want me to walk in here—

Charley. I am offering you a job.

Willy. I don't want your goddam job!

Charley. When the hell are you going to grow up?

Willy [*furiously*]. You big ignoramus, if you say that to me again I'll rap you one! I don't care how big you are!

[*He's ready to fight*]

[*Pause*]

Charley [*kindly, going to him*]. How much do you need, Willy?

Willy. Charley, I'm strapped, I'm strapped. I don't know what to do. I was just fired.

Charley. Howard fired you?

Willy. That snotnose. Imagine that? I named him. I named him Howard.

Charley. Willy, when're you gonna realize that them things don't mean anything? You named him Howard, but you can't sell that. The only thing you got in this world is what you can sell. And the funny thing is that you're a salesman, and you don't know that.

Willy. I've always tried to think otherwise, I guess. I always felt that if a man

was impressive, and well liked, that nothing—

Charley. Why must everybody like you? Who liked J. P. Morgan? Was he impressive? In a Turkish bath he'd look like a butcher. But with his pockets on he was very well liked. Now listen, Willy, I know you don't like me, and nobody can say I'm in love with you, but I'll give you a job because—just for the hell of it, put it that way. Now what do you say?

Willy. I—I just can't work for you, Charley.

Charley. What're you, jealous of me?

Willy. I can't work for you, that's all, don't ask me why.

Charley [*angered, takes out more bills*]. You been jealous of me all your life, you damned fool! Here, pay your insurance.

[*He puts the money in Willy's hand*]

Willy. I'm keeping strict accounts.

Charley. I've got some work to do. Take care of yourself. And pay your insurance.

Willy [*moving to the right*]. Funny, y'know? After all the highways, and the trains, and the appointments, and the years, you end up worth more dead than alive.

Charley. Willy, nobody's worth nothin' dead. [*After a slight pause*] Did you hear what I said?

[*WILLY stands still, dreaming*]

Charley. Willy!

Willy. Apologize to Bernard for me when you see him. I didn't mean to argue with him. He's a fine boy. They're all fine boys, and they'll end up big—all of them. Someday they'll all play tennis together. Wish me luck, Charley. He saw Bill Oliver today.

Charley. Good luck.

Willy [*on the verge of tears*]. Charley, you're the only friend I got. Isn't that a remarkable thing?

[*He goes out*]

Charley. Jesus!

[*CHARLEY stares after him a moment and follows. All light blacks out. Suddenly raucous music is heard, and a red glow rises behind the screen at right. STANLEY, a young waiter, appears, carrying a table, followed by HAPPY, who is carrying two chairs*]

Stanley [*putting the table down*]. That's all right, Mr. Loman, I can handle it myself.

[*He turns and takes the chairs from*

Happy and places them at the table

Happy [glancing around]. Oh, this is better.

Stanley. Sure, in the front there you're in the middle of all kinds a noise. Whenever you got a party, Mr. Loman, you just tell me and I'll put you back here. Y'know, there's a lotta people they don't like it private, because when they go out they like to see a lotta action around them because they're sick and tired to stay in the house by theirself. But I know you, you ain't from Hackensack. You know what I mean?

Happy [sitting down]. So how's it coming, Stanley?

Stanley. Ah, it's a dog's life. I only wish during the war they'd a took me in the Army. I coulda been dead by now.

Happy. My brother's back, Stanley.

Stanley. Oh, he come back, heh? From the Far West.

Happy. Yeah, big cattle man, my brother, so treat him right. And my father's coming too.

Stanley. Oh, your father too!

Happy. You got a couple of nice lobsters?

Stanley. Hundred per cent, big.

Happy. I want them with the claws.

Stanley. Don't worry, I don't give you no mice. [*Happy laughs*] How about some wine? It'll put a head on the meal.

Happy. No. You remember, Stanley, that recipe I brought you from overseas? With the champagne in it?

Stanley. Oh, yeah, sure. I still got it tacked up yet in the kitchen. But that'll have to cost a buck apiece anyways.

Happy. That's all right.

Stanley. What'd you, hit a number or somethin'?

Happy. No, it's a little celebration. My brother is—I think he pulled off a big deal today. I think we're going into business together.

Stanley. Great! That's the best for you. Because a family business, you know what I mean?—that's the best.

Happy. That's what I think.

Stanley. 'Cause what's the difference? Somebody steals? It's in the family. Know what I mean? [*Sotto voce*] Like this bartender here. The boss is goin' crazy what kinda leak he's got in the cash register. You put it in but it don't come out.

Happy [raising his head]. Sh!

Stanley. What?

Happy. You notice I wasn't lookin' right or left, was I?

Stanley. No.

Happy. And my eyes are closed.

Stanley. So what's the—?

Happy. Strudel's comin'.

Stanley [catching on, looks around]. Ah, no, there's no—

[*He breaks off as a furred, lavishly dressed girl enters and sits at the next table. Both follow her with their eyes*]

Stanley. Geez, how'd ya know?

Happy. I got radar or something. [*Staring directly at her profile*] Ooooooooo . . .

Stanley. I think that's for you, Mr. Loman.

Happy. Look at that mouth. Oh, God. And the binoculars.

Stanley. Geez, you got a life, Mr. Loman.

Happy. Wait on her.

Stanley [going to the girl's table]. Would you like a menu, ma'am?

Girl. I'm expecting someone, but I'd like a—

Happy. Why don't you bring her—excuse me, miss, do you mind? I sell champagne, and I'd like you to try my brand. Bring her a champagne, Stanley.

Girl. That's awfully nice of you.

Happy. Don't mention it. It's all company money.

[*He laughs*]

Girl. That's a charming product to be selling, isn't it?

Happy. Oh, gets to be like everything else. Selling is selling, y'know.

Girl. I suppose.

Happy. You don't happen to sell, do you?

Girl. No, I don't sell.

Happy. Would you object to a compliment from a stranger? You ought to be on a magazine cover.

Girl [looking at him a little archly]. I have been.

[*STANLEY comes in with a glass of champagne*]

Happy. What'd I say before, Stanley? You see? She's a cover girl.

Stanley. Oh, I could see. I could see.

Happy [to the GIRL]. What magazine?

Girl. Oh, a lot of them. [*She takes the drink*] Thank you.

Happy. You know what they say in France, don't you? "Champagne is the drink of the complexion"—Hya, Biff!

[*Biff has entered and sits with HAPPY*]

Biff. Hello, kid. Sorry I'm late.

Happy. I just got here. Uh, Miss—?

Girls. Forsythe.

Happy. Miss Forsythe, this is my brother.

Biff. Is Dad here?

Happy. His name is Biff. You might've heard of him. Great football player.

Girl. Really? What team?

Happy. Are you familiar with football?

Girl. No, I'm afraid I'm not.

Happy. Biff is quarterback with the New York Giants.

Girl. Well, that is nice, isn't it?

[*She drinks*]

Happy. Good health.

Girl. I'm happy to meet you.

Happy. That's my name. Hap. It's really Harold, but at West Point they called me Happy.

Girl [*now really impressed*]. Oh, I see. How do you do?

[*She turns her profile*]

Biff. Isn't Dad coming?

Happy. You want her?

Biff. Oh, I could never make that.

Happy. I remember the time that idea would never come into your head. Where's the old confidence, Biff?

Biff. I just saw Oliver—

Happy. Wait a minute. I've got to see that old confidence again. Do you want her? She's on call.

Biff. Oh, no.

[*He turns to look at the GIRL*]

Happy. I'm telling you. Watch this. [*Turning to the GIRL*] Honey? [*She turns to him*] Are you busy?

Girl. Well, I am . . . but I could make a phone call.

Happy. Do that, will you, honey? And see if you can get a friend. We'll be here for a while. Biff is one of the greatest football players in the country.

Girl [*standing up*]. Well, I'm certainly happy to meet you.

Happy. Come back soon.

Girl. I'll try.

Happy. Don't try, honey, try hard.

[*The GIRL exits. STANLEY follows, shaking*

ing his head in bewildered admiration]

Happy. Isn't that a shame now? A beautiful girl like that? That's why I can't get married. There's not a good woman in a thousand. New York is loaded with them, kid!

Biff. Hap, look—

Happy. I told you she was on call!

Biff [*strangely unnerved*]. Cut it out, will ya? I want to say something to you.

Happy. Did you see Oliver?

Biff. I saw him all right. Now look, I want to tell Dad a couple of things and I want you to help me.

Happy. What? Is he going to back you?

Biff. Are you crazy? You're out of your goddam head, you know that?

Happy. Why? What happened?

Biff [*breathlessly*]. I did a terrible thing today, Hap. It's been the strangest day I ever went through. I'm all numb, I swear.

Happy. You mean he wouldn't see you?

Biff. Well, I waited six hours for him, see? All day. Kept sending my name in. Even tried to date his secretary so she'd get me to him, but no soap.

Happy. Because you're not showin' the old confidence, Biff. He remembered you, didn't he?

Biff [*stopping HAPPY with a gesture*]. Finally, about five o'clock, he comes out. Didn't remember who I was or anything. I felt like such an idiot, Hap.

Happy. Did you tell him my Florida idea?

Biff. He walked away. I saw him for one minute. I got so mad I could've torn the walls down! How the hell did I ever get the idea I was a salesman there? I even believed myself that I'd been a salesman for him! And then he gave me one look and—I realized what a ridiculous lie my whole life has been! We've been talking in a dream for fifteen years. I was a shipping clerk.

Happy. What'd you do?

Biff [*with great tension and wonder*]. Well, he left, see. And the secretary went out. I was all alone in the waiting-room. I don't know what came over me, Hap. The next thing I know I'm in his office—paneled walls, everything. I can't explain it. I—Hap, I took his fountain pen.

Happy. Geez, did he catch you?

Biff. I ran out. I ran down all eleven flights. I ran and ran and ran.

Happy. That was an awful dumb—what'd you do that for?

Biff [agonized]. I don't know, I just—wanted to take something, I don't know. You gotta help me, Hap, I'm gonna tell Pop.

Happy. You crazy? What for?

Biff. Hap, he's got to understand that I'm not the man somebody lends that kind of money to. He thinks I've been spiting him all these years and it's eating him up.

Happy. That's just it. You tell him something nice.

Biff. I can't.

Happy. Say you got a lunch date with Oliver tomorrow.

Biff. So what do I do tomorrow?

Happy. You leave the house tomorrow and come back at night and say Oliver is thinking it over. And he thinks it over for a couple of weeks, and gradually it fades away and nobody's the worse.

Biff. But it'll go on forever!

Happy. Dad is never so happy as when he's looking forward to something!

[WILLY enters]

Happy. Hello, scout!

Willy. Gee, I haven't been here in years!

[STANLEY has followed WILLY in and sets a chair for him. STANLEY starts off but HAPPY stops him]

Happy. Stanley!

[STANLEY stands by, waiting for an order]

Biff. [going to WILLY with guilt, as to an invalid]. Sit down, Pop. You want a drink?

Willy. Sure, I don't mind.

Biff. Let's get a load on.

Willy. You look worried.

Biff. N-no. [To STANLEY] Scotch all around. Make it doubles.

Stanley. Doubles, right.

[He goes]

Willy. You had a couple already, didn't you?

Biff. Just a couple, yeah.

Willy. Well, what happened, boy? [Nodding affirmatively, with a smile] Everything go all right?

Biff [takes a breath, then reaches out and grasps WILLY's hand]. Pal... [He is smiling bravely, and WILLY is smiling too] I had an experience today.

Happy. Terrific, Pop.

Willy. That so? What happened?

Biff [high, slightly alcoholic, above the earth]. I'm going to tell you everything from first to last. It's been a strange day. [Silence. He looks around, composes himself as best he can, but his breath keeps breaking the rhythm of his voice] I had to wait quite a while for him, and—

Willy. Oliver?

Biff. Yeah, Oliver. All day, as a matter of cold fact. And a lot of—instances—facts, Pop, facts about my life came back to me. Who was it, Pop? Who ever said I was a salesman with Oliver?

Willy. Well, you were.

Biff. No, Dad, I was a shipping clerk.

Willy. But you were practically—

Biff [with determination]. Dad, I don't know who said it first, but I was never a salesman for Bill Oliver.

Willy. What're you talking about?

Biff. Let's hold on to the facts tonight, Pop. We're not going to get anywhere bullin' around. I was a shipping clerk.

Willy [angrily]. All right, now listen to me—

Biff. Why don't you let me finish?

Willy. I'm not interested in stories about the past or any crap of that kind because the woods are burning, boys, you understand? There's a big blaze going on all around. I was fired today.

Biff [shocked]. How could you be?

Willy. I was fired, and I'm looking for a little good news to tell your mother, because the woman has waited and the woman has suffered. The gist of it is that I haven't got a story left in my head, Biff. So don't give me a lecture about facts and aspects. I am not interested. Now what've you got to say to me?

[STANLEY enters with three drinks.

They wait until he leaves]

Willy. Did you see Oliver?

Biff. Jesus, Dad!

Willy. You mean you didn't go up there?

Happy. Sure he went up there.

Biff. I did. I—saw him. How could they fire you?

Willy [on the edge of his chair]. What kind of a welcome did he give you?

Biff. He won't even let you work on commission?

Willy. I'm out! [Driving] So tell me, he gave you a warm welcome?

Happy. Sure, Pop, sure!

Biff [driven]. Well, it was kind of—

Willy. I was wondering if he'd remember you. [*To Happy*] Imagine, man doesn't see him for ten, twelve years and gives him that kind of a welcome!

Happy. Damn right!

Biff [trying to return to the offensive].
Pop, look—

Willy. You know why he remembered you, don't you? Because you impressed him in those days.

Biff. Let's talk quietly and get this down to the facts, huh?

Willy [as though Biff had been interrupting]. Well, what happened? It's great news, Biff. Did he take you into his office or'd you talk in the waiting-room?

Biff. Well, he came in, see, and—

Willy [with a big smile]. What'd he say? Betcha he threw his arm around you.

Biff. Well, he kinda—

Willy. He's a fine man. [*To Happy*] Very hard man to see, y'know.

Happy [agreeing]. Oh, I know.

Willy [to Biff]. Is that where you had the drinks?

Biff. Yeah, he gave me a couple of— no, no!

Happy [cutting in]. He told him my Florida idea.

Willy. Don't interrupt. [*To Biff*] How'd he react to the Florida idea?

Biff. Dad, will you give me a minute to explain?

Willy. I've been waiting for you to explain since I sat down here! What happened? He took you into his office and what?

Biff. Well—I talked. And—and he listened, see.

Willy. Famous for the way he listens, y'know. What was his answer?

Biff. His answer was— [*He breaks off, suddenly angry*] Dad, you're not letting me tell you what I want to tell you!

Willy [accusing, angered]. You didn't see him, did you?

Biff. I did see him!

Willy. What'd you insult him or something? You insulted him, didn't you?

Biff. Listen, will you let me out of it, will you just let me out of it!

Happy. What the hell!

Willy. Tell me what happened!

Biff [to Happy]. I can't talk to him!

[*A single trumpet note jars the ear. The light of green leaves stains the house, which holds the air of night and a dream. Young BERNARD enters and knocks on the door of the house*]

Young Bernard [faintly]. Mrs. Loman, Mrs. Loman!

Happy. Tell him what happened!

Biff [to Happy]. Shut up and leave me alone!

Willy. No, no! You had to go and flunk math!

Biff. What math? What're you talking about?

Young Bernard. Mrs. Loman, Mrs. Loman!

[*LINDA appears in the house, as of old*]

Willy [wildly]. Math, math, math!

Biff. Take it easy, Pop!

Young Bernard. Mrs. Loman!

Willy [furiously]. If you hadn't flunked you'd've been set by now!

Biff. Now, look, I'm gonna tell you what happened, and you're going to listen to me.

Young Bernard. Mrs. Loman!

Biff. I waited six hours—

Happy. What the hell are you saying?

Biff. I kept sending in my name but he wouldn't see me. So finally he . . .

[*He continues unheard as light fades low on the restaurant*]

Young Bernard. Biff flunked math!

Linda. No!

Young Bernard. Birnbaum flunked him! They won't graduate him!

Linda. But they have to. He's gotta go to the university. Where is he? Biff! Biff!

Young Bernard. No, he left. He went to Grand Central.

Linda. Grand— You mean he went to Boston!

Young Bernard. Is Uncle Willy in Boston?

Linda. Oh, maybe Willy can talk to the teacher. Oh, the poor, poor boy!

[*Light on house area snaps out*]

Biff [at the table, now audible, holding up a gold fountain pen]. . . . so I'm washed up with Oliver, you understand? Are you listening to me?

Willy [at a loss]. Yeah, sure. If you hadn't flunked—

Biff. Flunked what? What're you talking about?

Willy. Don't blame everything on me!

I didn't flunk math—you did! What pen?

Happy. That was awful dumb, Biff, a pen like that is worth—

Willy [seeing the pen for the first time]. You took Oliver's pen?

Biff [weakening]. Dad, I just explained it to you.

Willy. You stole Bill Oliver's fountain pen!

Biff. I didn't exactly steal it! That's just what I've been explaining to you!

Happy. He had it in his hand and just then Oliver walked in, so he got nervous and stuck it in his pocket!

Willy. My God, Biff!

Biff. I never intended to do it, Dad!

Operator's Voice. Standish Arms, good evening!

Willy [shouting]. I'm not in my room!

Biff [frightened]. Dad, what's the matter?

[*He and HAPPY stand up*]

Operator. Ringing Mr. Loman for you!

Willy. I'm not there, stop it!

Biff [horrified, gets down on one knee before WILLY]. Dad, I'll make good, I'll make good. [*WILLY tries to get to his feet. BIFF holds him down*] Sit down now.

Willy. No, you're no good, you're no good for anything.

Biff. I am, Dad, I'll find something else, you understand? Now don't worry about anything. [*He holds up WILLY's face*] Talk to me, Dad.

Operator. Mr. Loman does not answer. Shall I page him?

Willy [attempting to stand, as though to rush and silence the OPERATOR]. No, no, no!

Happy. He'll strike something, Pop.

Willy. No, no . . .

Biff [desperately, standing over WILLY]. Pop, listen! Listen to me! I'm telling you something good. Oliver talked to his partner about the Florida idea. You listening? He—he talked to his partner, and he came to me . . . I'm going to be all right, you hear? Dad, listen to me, he said it was just a question of the amount!

Willy. Then you . . . got it?

Happy. He's gonna be terrific, Pop!

Willy [trying to stand]. Then you got it, haven't you? You got it! You got it!

Biff [agonized, holds WILLY down]. No, no. Look, Pop. I'm supposed to have lunch with them tomorrow. I'm just telling you this so you'll know that I can still make

an impression, Pop. And I'll make good somewhere, but I can't go tomorrow, see?

Willy. Why not? You simply—

Biff. But the pen, Pop!

Willy. You give it to him and tell him it was an oversight!

Happy. Sure, have lunch tomorrow!

Biff. I can't say that—

Willy. You were doing a crossword puzzle and accidentally used his pen!

Biff. Listen, kid, I took those balls years ago, now I walk in with his fountain pen? That clinches it, don't you see? I can't face him like that! I'll try elsewhere.

Page's Voice. Paging Mr. Loman!

Willy. Don't you want to be anything?

Biff. Pop, how can I go back?

Willy. You don't want to be anything, is that what's behind it?

Biff [now angry at WILLY for not crediting his sympathy]. Don't take it that way! You think it was easy walking into that office after what I'd done to him? A team of horses couldn't have dragged me back to Bill Oliver!

Willy. Then why'd you go?

Biff. Why did I go? Why did I go! Look at you! Look at what's become of you!

[*Off left, THE WOMAN laughs*]

Willy. Biff, you're going to go to that lunch tomorrow, or—

Biff. I can't go. I've got no appointment!

Happy. Biff, for . . . !

Willy. Are you spiting me?

Biff. Don't take it that way! God-dammit!

Willy [strikes BIFF and falters away from the table]. You rotten little louse! Are you spiting me?

The Woman. Someone's at the door, Willy!

Biff. I'm no good, can't you see what I am?

Happy [separating them]. Hey, you're in a restaurant! Now cut it out, both of you! [*The girls enter*] Hello, girls, sit down.

[*THE WOMAN laughs, off left*]

Miss Forsythe. I guess we might as well. This is Letta.

The Woman. Willy, are you going to wake up?

Biff [ignoring WILLY]. How're ya, miss, sit down. What do you drink?

Miss Forsythe. Letta might not be able to stay long.

Letta. I gotta get up very early tomorrow. I got jury duty. I'm so excited! Were you fellows ever on a jury?

Biff. No, but I been in front of them! [*The girls laugh*] This is my father.

Letta. Isn't he cute? Sit down with us, Pop.

Happy. Sit him down, Biff!

Biff [*going to him*]. Come on, slugger, drink us under the table. To hell with it! Come on, sit down, pal.

[*On BIFF's last insistence, WILLY is about to sit*]

The Woman [*now urgently*]. Willy, are you going to answer the door!

[*THE WOMAN's call pulls WILLY back. He starts right, befuddled*]

Biff. Hey, where are you going?

Willy. Open the door.

Biff. The door?

Willy. The washroom . . . the door . . . where's the door?

Biff [*leading WILLY to the left*]. Just go straight down.

[*WILLY moves left*]

The Woman. Willy, Willy, are you going to get up, get up, get up?

[*WILLY exits left*]

Letta. I think it's sweet you bring your daddy along.

Miss Forsythe. Oh, he isn't really your father!

Biff [*at left, turning to her resentfully*]. *Miss Forsythe*, you've just seen a prince walk by. A fine, troubled prince. A hard-working, unappreciated prince. A pal, you understand? A good companion. Always for his boys.

Letta. That's so sweet.

Happy. Well, girls, what's the program? We're wasting time. Come on, Biff. Gather round. Where would you like to go?

Biff. Why don't you do something for him?

Happy. Me!

Biff. Don't you give a damn for him, Hap?

Happy. What're you talking about? I'm the one who—

Biff. I sense it, you don't give a good goddam about him. [*He takes the rolled-up hose from his pocket and puts it on the table in front of HAPPY*] Look what I found

in the cellar, for Christ's sake. How can you bear to let it go on?

Happy. Me? Who goes away? Who runs off and—

Biff. Yeah, but he doesn't mean anything to you. You could help him—I can't! Don't you understand what I'm talking about? He's going to kill himself, don't you know that?

Happy. Don't I know it! Me!

Biff. Hap, help him! Jesus . . . help him . . . Help me, help me, I can't bear to look at his face!

[*Ready to weep, he hurries out, up right*]

Happy [*starting after him*]. Where are you going?

Miss Forsythe. What's he so mad about?

Happy. Come on, girls, we'll catch up with him.

Miss Forsythe [*as HAPPY pushes her out*]. Say, I don't like that temper of his!

Happy. He's just a little overstrung, he'll be all right!

Willy [*off left, as THE WOMAN laughs*]. Don't answer! Don't answer!

Letta. Don't you want to tell your father—

Happy. No, that's not my father. He's just a guy. Come on, we'll catch Biff, and, honey, we're going to paint this town! Stanley, where's the check! Hey, Stanley!

[*They exit. STANLEY looks toward left*]

Stanley [*calling to HAPPY indignantly*]. Mr. Loman! Mr. Loman!

[*STANLEY picks up a chair and follows them off. Knocking is heard off left.*]

THE WOMAN enters, laughing.

WILLY follows her. She is in a black slip; he is buttoning his shirt. Raw, sensuous music accompanies their speech]

Willy. Will you stop laughing? Will you stop?

The Woman. Aren't you going to answer the door? He'll wake the whole hotel.

Willy. I'm not expecting anybody.

The Woman. Whyn't you have another drink, honey, and stop being so damn self-centered?

Willy. I'm so lonely.

The Woman. You know you ruined me, Willy? From now on, whenever you come to the office, I'll see that you go right through to the buyers. No waiting at my desk any more, Willy. You ruined me.

Willy. That's nice of you to say that.

The Woman. Gee, you are self-centered! Why so sad? You are the saddest, self-centeredest soul I ever did see-saw. [She laughs. He kisses her] Come on inside, drummer boy. It's silly to be dressing in the middle of the night. [As knocking is heard] Aren't you going to answer the door?

Willy. They're knocking on the wrong door.

The Woman. But I felt the knocking. And he heard us talking in here. Maybe the hotel's on fire!

Willy [his terror rising]. It's a mistake.

The Woman. Then tell him to go away!

Willy. There's nobody there.

The Woman. It's getting on my nerves, Willy. There's somebody standing out there and it's getting on my nerves!

Willy [pushing her away from him]. All right, stay in the bathroom here, and don't come out. I think there's a law in Massachusetts about it, so don't come out. It may be that new room clerk. He looked very mean. So don't come out. It's a mistake, there's no fire.

[The knocking is heard again. He takes a few steps away from her, and she vanishes into the wing. The light follows him, and now he is facing Young BIFF, who carries a suitcase. BIFF steps toward him. The music is gone!]

BIFF. Why didn't you answer?

Willy. Biff! What are you doing in Boston?

BIFF. Why didn't you answer? I've been knocking for five minutes, I called you on the phone—

Willy. I just heard you. I was in the bathroom and had the door shut. Did anything happen home?

BIFF. Dad—I let you down.

Willy. What do you mean?

BIFF. Dad . . .

Willy. Biff, what's this about? [Putting his arm around BIFF] Come on, let's go downstairs and get you a malted.

BIFF. Dad, I flunked math.

Willy. Not for the term?

BIFF. The term. I haven't got enough credits to graduate.

Willy. You mean to say Bernard wouldn't give you the answers?

BIFF. He did, he tried, but I only got a sixty-one.

Willy. And they wouldn't give you four points?

BIFF. Birnbaum refused absolutely. I begged him, Pop, but he won't give me those points. You gotta talk to him before they close the school. Because if he saw the kind of man you are, and you just talked to him in your way, I'm sure he'd come through for me. The class came right before practice, see, and I didn't go enough. Would you talk to him? He'd like you, Pop. You know the way you could talk.

Willy. You're on. We'll drive right back.

BIFF. Oh, Dad, good work! I'm sure he'll change it for you!

Willy. Go downstairs and tell the clerk I'm checkin' out. Go right down.

BIFF. Yes, sir! See, the reason he hates me, Pop—one day he was late for class so I got up at the blackboard and imitated him. I crossed my eyes and talked with a lithp.

Willy [laughing]. You did? The kids like it?

BIFF. They nearly died laughing!

Willy. Yeah? What'd you do?

BIFF. The thquare root of thixthy twee is . . . [WILLY bursts out laughing; BIFF joins him] And in the middle of it he walked in!

[WILLY laughs and THE WOMAN joins in offstage]

Willy [without hesitation]. Hurry downstairs and—

BIFF. Somebody in there?

Willy. No, that was next door.

[THE WOMAN laughs offstage]

BIFF. Somebody got in your bathroom!

Willy. No, it's the next room, there's a party—

The Woman [enters, laughing. She lisps this]. Can I come in? There's something in the bathtub, Willy, and it's moving!

[WILLY looks at BIFF, who is staring open-mouthed and horrified at THE WOMAN]

Willy. Ah—you better go back to your room. They must be finished painting by now. They're painting her room so I let her take a shower here. Go back, go back . . .

[He pushes her]

The Woman [resisting]. But I've got to get dressed, Willy, I can't—

Willy. Get out of here! Go back, go back . . . [*Suddenly striving for the ordinary*] This is Miss Francis, Biff, she's a buyer. They're painting her room. Go back, Miss Francis, go back . . .

The Woman. But my clothes, I can't go out naked in the hall!

Willy [*pushing her offstage*]. Get outa here! Go back, go back!

[Biff slowly sits down on his suitcase as the argument continues offstage]

The Woman. Where's my stockings? You promised me stockings, Willy!

Willy. I have no stockings here!

The Woman. You had two boxes of size nine sheers for me, and I want them!

Willy. Here, for God's sake, will you get outa here!

The Woman [*enters holding a box of stockings*]. I just hope there's nobody in the hall. That's all I hope. [*To Biff*] Are you football or baseball?

Biff. Football.

The Woman [*angry, humiliated*]. That's me too. G'night.

[*She snatches her clothes from WILLY, and walks out*]

Willy [*after a pause*]. Well, better get going. I want to get to the school first thing in the morning. Get my suits out of the closet. I'll get my valise. [Biff doesn't move] What's the matter? [Biff remains motionless, tears falling] She's a buyer. Buys for J. H. Simmons. She lives down the hall—they're painting. You don't imagine—[*He breaks off. After a pause*] Now listen, pal, she's just a buyer. She sees merchandise in her room and they have to keep it looking just so . . . [*Pause. Assuming command*] All right, get my suits. [Biff doesn't move] Now stop crying and do as I say. I gave you an order. Biff, I gave you an order! Is that what you do when I give you an order? How dare you cry! [*Putting his arm around Biff*] Now look, Biff, when you grow up you'll understand about these things. You mustn't—you mustn't overemphasize a thing like this. I'll see Birnbaum first thing in the morning.

Biff. Never mind.

Willy [*getting down beside Biff*]. Never mind! He's going to give you those points. I'll see to it.

Biff. He wouldn't listen to you.

Willy. He certainly will listen to me.

You need those points for the U. of Virginia.

Biff. I'm not going there.

Willy. Heh? If I can't get him to change that mark you'll make it up in summer school. You've got all summer to—

Biff [*his weeping breaking from him*]. Dad . . .

Willy [*infected by it*]. Oh, my boy . . .

Biff. Dad . . .

Willy. She's nothing to me, Biff. I was lonely, I was terribly lonely.

Biff. You—you gave her Mama's stockings!

[*His tears break through and he rises to go*]

Willy [*grabbing for Biff*]. I gave you an order!

Biff. Don't touch me, you—liar!

Willy. I apologize for that!

Biff. You fake! You phony little fake! You fake!

[*Overcome, he turns quickly and weeping fully goes out with his suitcase. WILLY is left on the floor on his knees*]

Willy. I gave you an order! Biff, come back here or I'll beat you! Come back here! I'll whip you!

[*Stanley comes quickly in from the right and stands in front of WILLY*]

Willy [*shouts at Stanley*]. I gave you an order . . .

Stanley. Hey, let's pick it up, pick it up, Mr. Loman. [*He helps WILLY to his feet*] Your boys left with the chippies. They said they'll see you home.

[*A second waiter watches some distance away*]

Willy. But we were supposed to have dinner together.

[*Music is heard, WILLY's theme*]

Stanley. Can you make it?

Willy. I'll—sure, I can make it. [*Suddenly concerned about his clothes*] Do I—I look all right?

Stanley. Sure, you look all right.

[*He flicks a speck off WILLY's lapel*]

Willy. Here—here's a dollar.

Stanley. Oh, your son paid me. It's all right.

Willy [*putting it in Stanley's hand*]. No, take it. You're a good boy.

Stanley. Oh, no, you don't have to . . .

Willy. Here—here's some more, I don't need it any more. [*After a slight pause*]

Tell me—is there a seed store in the neighborhood?

Stanley. Seeds? You mean like to plant?

[As *WILLY* turns, *STANLEY* slips the money back into his jacket pocket]

Willy. Yes. Carrots, peas . . .

Stanley. Well, there's hardware stores on Sixth Avenue, but it may be too late now.

Willy [anxiously]. Oh, I'd better hurry. I've got to get some seeds. [He starts off to the right] I've got to get some seeds, right away. Nothing's planted. I don't have a thing in the ground.

[*WILLY* hurries out as the light goes down. *STANLEY* moves over to the right after him, watches him off. The other waiter has been staring at *WILLY*]

Stanley [to the waiter]. Well, whatta you looking at?

[The waiter picks up the chairs and moves off right. *STANLEY* takes the table and follows him. The light fades on this area. There is a long pause, the sound of the flute coming over. The light gradually rises on the kitchen, which is empty. *HAPPY* appears at the door of the house, followed by *BIFF*. *HAPPY* is carrying a large bunch of long-stemmed roses. He enters the kitchen, looks around for *LINDA*. Not seeing her, he turns to *BIFF*, who is just outside the house door, and makes a gesture with his hands, indicating "Not here, I guess." He looks into the living-room and freezes. Inside, *LINDA*, unseen, is seated, *WILLY*'s coat on her lap. She rises ominously and quietly and moves toward *HAPPY*, who backs up into the kitchen, afraid]

Happy. Hey, what're you doing up? [*LINDA* says nothing but moves toward him implacably] Where's Pop? [He keeps backing to the right, and now *LINDA* is in full view in the doorway to the living-room] Is he sleeping?

Linda. Where were you?

Happy [trying to laugh it off]. We met two girls, Mom, very fine types. Here, we brought you some flowers. [Offering them to her] Put them in your room, Ma.

[She knocks them to the floor at *BIFF*'s feet. He has now come inside and

closed the door behind him. She stares at *BIFF*, silent]

Happy. Now what'd you do that for? Mom, I want you to have some flowers—*Linda* [cutting *HAPPY* off, violently to *BIFF*]. Don't you care whether he lives or dies?

Happy [going to the stairs]. Come upstairs, *Biff*.

Biff [with a flare of disgust, to *HAPPY*]. Go away from me! [To *LINDA*] What do you mean, lives or dies? Nobody's dying around here, pal.

Linda. Get out of my sight! Get out of here!

Biff. I wanna see the boss.

Linda. You're not going near him!

Biff. Where is he?

[He moves into the living-room and *LINDA* follows]

Linda [shouting after *BIFF*]. You invite him for dinner. He looks forward to it all day—[*BIFF* appears in his parents' bedroom, looks around, and exits]—and then you desert him there. There's no stranger you'd do that to!

Happy. Why? He had a swell time with us. Listen, when I—[*LINDA* comes back into the kitchen]—desert him I hope I don't outlive the day!

Linda. Get out of here!

Happy. Now look, Mom . . .

Linda. Did you have to go to women tonight? You and your lousy rotten whores!

[*BIFF* re-enters the kitchen]

Happy. Mom, all we did was follow *Biff* around trying to cheer him up! [To *BIFF*] Boy, what a night you gave me!

Linda. Get out of here, both of you, and don't come back! I don't want you tormenting him any more. Go on now, get your things together! [To *BIFF*] You can sleep in his apartment. [She starts to pick up the flowers and stops herself] Pick up this stuff, I'm not your maid any more. Pick it up, you bum, you!

[*HAPPY* turns his back to her in refusal. *BIFF* slowly moves over and gets down on his knees, picking up the flowers]

Linda. You're a pair of animals! Not one, not another living soul would have had the cruelty to walk out on that man in a restaurant!

Biff [not looking at her]. Is that what he said?

Linda. He didn't have to say anything. He was so humiliated he nearly limped when he came in.

Happy. But, Mom, he had a great time with us—

Biff [cutting him off violently]. Shut up!
[Without another word, *HAPPY* goes upstairs]

Linda. You! You didn't even go in to see if he was all right!

Biff [still on the floor in front of *LINDA*, the flowers in his hand; with self-loathing]. No. Didn't. Didn't do a damned thing. How do you like that, heh? Left him babbling in a toilet.

Linda. You louse. You . . .

Biff. Now you hit it on the nose! [*He gets up, throws the flowers in the wastebasket*] The scum of the earth, and you're looking at him!

Linda. Get out of here!

Biff. I gotta talk to the boss, Mom. Where is he?

Linda. You're not going near him. Get out of this house!

Biff [with absolute assurance, determination]. No. We're gonna have an abrupt conversation, him and me.

Linda. You're not talking to him!

[Hammering is heard from outside the house, off right. *BIFF* turns toward the noise]

Linda [suddenly pleading]. Will you please leave him alone?

Biff. What's he doing out there?

Linda. He's planting the garden!

Biff [quietly]. Now? Oh, my God!

[*BIFF* moves outside, *LINDA* following.

The light dies down on them and comes up on the center of the apron as *WILLY* walks into it. He is carrying a flashlight, a hoe, and a handful of seed packets. He raps the top of the hoe sharply to fix it firmly, and then moves to the left, measuring off the distance with his foot. He holds the flashlight to look at the seed packets, reading off the instructions. He is in the blue of night]

Willy. Carrots . . . quarter-inch apart. Rows . . . one-foot rows. [*He measures it off*] One foot. [*He puts down a package and measures off*] Beets. [*He puts down another package and measures again*] Let-

tuce. [*He reads the package, puts it down*] One foot—[*He breaks off as BEN appears at the right and moves slowly down to him*] What a proposition, ts, ts. Terrific, terrific. 'Cause she's suffered, Ben, the woman has suffered. You understand me? A man can't go out the way he came in, Ben, a man has got to add up to something. You can't, you can't—[*BEN moves toward him as though to interrupt*] You gotta consider, now. Don't answer so quick. Remember, it's a guaranteed twenty-thousand-dollar proposition. Now look, Ben, I want you to go through the ins and outs of this thing with me. I've got nobody to talk to, Ben, and the woman has suffered, you hear me?

Ben [standing still, considering]. What's the proposition?

Willy. It's twenty thousand dollars on the barrelhead. Guaranteed, gilt-edged, you understand?

Ben. You don't want to make a fool of yourself. They might not honor the policy.

Willy. How can they dare refuse? Didn't I work like a coolie to meet every premium on the nose? And now they don't pay off? Impossible!

Ben. It's called a cowardly thing, William.

Willy. Why? Does it take more guts to stand here the rest of my life ringing up a zero?

Ben [yielding]. That's a point, William. [*He moves, thinking, turns*] And twenty thousand—that is something one can feel with the hand, it is there.

Willy [now assured, with rising power]. Oh, Ben, that's the whole beauty of it! I see it like a diamond, shining in the dark, hard and rough, that I can pick up and touch in my hand. Not like—like an appointment! This would not be another damned-fool appointment, Ben, and it changes all the aspects. Because he thinks I'm nothing, see, and so he spites me. But the funeral—[*Straightening up*] Ben, that funeral will be massive! They'll come from Maine, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire! All the old-timers with the strange license plates—that boy will be thunder-struck, Ben, because he never realized—I am known! Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey—I am known, Ben, and he'll see it with his eyes once and for all. He'll see what I am, Ben! He's in for a shock, that boy!

Ben [coming down to the edge of the garden]. He'll call you a coward.

Willy [suddenly fearful]. No, that would be terrible.

Ben. Yes. And a damned fool.

Willy. No, no, he mustn't, I won't have that!

[*He is broken and desperate*]

Ben. He'll hate you, William.

[*The gay music of the Boys is heard*]

Willy. Oh, Ben, how do we get back to all the great times? Used to be so full of light, and comradeship, the sleigh-riding in winter, and the ruddiness on his cheeks. And always some kind of good news coming up, always something nice coming up ahead. And never even let me carry the valises in the house, and simonizing, simonizing that little red car! Why, why can't I give him something and not have him hate me?

Ben. Let me think about it. [*He glances at his watch*] I still have a little time. Remarkable proposition, but you've got to be sure you're not making a fool of yourself.

[*BEN drifts off upstage and goes out of sight. BIFF comes down from the left*]

Willy [suddenly conscious of BIFF, turns and looks up at him, then begins picking up the packages of seeds in confusion]. Where the hell is that seed? [*Indignantly*] You can't see nothing out here! They boxed in the whole goddam neighborhood!

Biff. There are people all around here. Don't you realize that?

Willy. I'm busy. Don't bother me.

Biff [taking the hoe from WILLY]. I'm saying good-by to you, Pop. [*WILLY looks at him, silent, unable to move*] I'm not coming back any more.

Willy. You're not going to see Oliver tomorrow?

Biff. I've got no appointment, Dad.

Willy. He put his arm around you, and you've got no appointment?

Biff. Pop, get this now, will you? Every-time I've left it's been a fight that sent me out of here. Today I realized something about myself and I tried to explain it to you and I—I think I'm just not smart enough to make any sense out of it for you. To hell with whose fault it is or anything like that. [*He takes WILLY's arm*] Let's just wrap it up, heh? Come on in, we'll tell Mom.

[*He gently tries to pull WILLY to left*]

Willy [frozen, immobile, with guilt in his voice]. No, I don't want to see her.

Biff. Come on!

[*He pulls again, and WILLY tries to pull away*]

Willy [highly nervous]. No, no, I don't want to see her.

Biff [tries to look into WILLY's face, as if to find the answer there]. Why don't you want to see her?

Willy [more harshly now]. Don't bother me, will you?

Biff. What do you mean, you don't want to see her? You don't want them calling you yellow, do you? This isn't your fault; it's me, I'm a bum. Now come inside! [*WILLY strains to get away*] Did you hear what I said to you?

[*WILLY pulls away and quickly goes by himself into the house. BIFF follows*]

Linda [to WILLY]. Did you plant, dear?

Biff [at the door, to LINDA]. All right, we had it out. I'm going and I'm not writing any more.

Linda [going to WILLY in the kitchen]. I think that's the best way, dear. 'Cause there's no use drawing it out, you'll just never get along.

[*WILLY doesn't respond*]

Biff. People ask where I am and what I'm doing, you don't know, and you don't care. That way it'll be off your mind and you can start brightening up again. All right? That clears it, doesn't it? [*WILLY is silent, and BIFF goes to him*] You gonna wish me luck, scout? [*He extends his hand*] What do you say?

Linda. Shake his hand, Willy.

Willy [turning to her, seething with hurt]. There's no necessity to mention the pen at all, y'know.

Biff [gently]. I've got no appointment, Dad.

Willy [erupting fiercely]. He put his arm around . . . ?

Biff. Dad, you're never going to see what I am, so what's the use of arguing? If I strike oil I'll send you a check. Meantime forget I'm alive.

Willy [to LINDA]. Spite, see?

Biff. Shake hands, Dad.

Willy. Not my hand.

Biff. I was hoping not to go this way.

Willy. Well, this is the way you're going. Good-by.

[BIFF looks at him a moment, then turns sharply and goes to the stairs]

Willy [stops him with]. May you rot in hell if you leave this house!

Biff [turning]. Exactly what is it that you want from me?

Willy. I want you to know, on the train, in the mountains, in the valleys, wherever you go, that you cut down your life for spite!

Biff. No, no.

Willy. Spite, spite, is the word of your undoing! And when you're down and out, remember what did it. When you're rotting somewhere beside the railroad tracks, remember, and don't you dare blame it on me!

Biff. I'm not blaming it on you!

Willy. I won't take the rap for this, you hear?

[HAPPY comes down the stairs and stands on the bottom step, watching]

Biff. That's just what I'm telling you!

Willy [sinking into a chair at the table, with full accusation]. You're trying to put a knife in me—don't think I don't know what you're doing!

Biff. All right, phony! Then let's lay it on the line.

[He whips the rubber tube out of his pocket and puts it on the table]

Happy. You crazy—

Linda. Biff!

[She moves to grab the hose, but BIFF holds it down with his hand]

Biff. Leave it there! Don't move it!

Willy [not looking at it]. What is that?

Biff. You know goddam well what that is.

Willy [caged, wanting to escape]. I never saw that.

Biff. You saw it. The mice didn't bring it into the cellar! What is this supposed to do, make a hero out of you? This supposed to make me sorry for you?

Willy. Never heard of it.

Biff. There'll be no pity for you, you hear it? No pity!

Willy [to LINDA]. You hear the spite!

Biff. No, you're going to hear the truth—what you are and what I am!

Linda. Stop it!

Willy. Spite!

Happy [coming down toward BIFF]. You cut it now!

Biff [to HAPPY]. The man don't know who we are! The man is gonna know!

[To WILLY] We never told the truth for ten minutes in this house!

Happy. We always told the truth!

Biff [turning on him]. You big blow, are you the assistant buyer? You're one of the two assistants to the assistant, aren't you?

Happy. Well, I'm practically—

Biff. You're practically full of it! We all are! And I'm through with it. [To WILLY] Now hear this, Willy, this is me.

Willy. I know you!

Biff. You know why I had no address for three months? I stole a suit in Kansas City and I was in jail. [To LINDA, who is sobbing] Stop crying. I'm through with it.

[LINDA turns away from them, her hands covering her face]

Willy. I suppose that's my fault!

Biff. I stole myself out of every good job since high school!

Willy. And whose fault is that?

Biff. And I never got anywhere because you blew me so full of hot air I could never stand taking orders from anybody! That's whose fault it is!

Willy. I hear that!

Linda. Don't, Biff!

Biff. It's goddam time you heard that! I had to be boss big shot in two weeks, and I'm through with it!

Willy. Then hang yourself! For spite, hang yourself!

Biff. No! Nobody's hanging himself, Willy! I ran down eleven flights with a pen in my hand today. And suddenly I stopped, you hear me? And in the middle of that office building, do you hear this? I stopped in the middle of that building and I saw—the sky. I saw the things that I love in this world. The work and the food and time to sit and smoke. And I looked at the pen and said to myself, what the hell am I grabbing this for? Why am I trying to become what I don't want to be? What am I doing in an office, making a contemptuous, begging fool of myself, when all I want is out there, waiting for me the minute I say I know who I am! Why can't I say that, Willy?

[He tries to make WILLY face him, but WILLY pulls away and moves to the left]

Willy [with hatred, threateningly]. The door of your life is wide open!

Biff. Pop! I'm a dime a dozen, and so are you!

Willy [turning on him now in an uncontrolled outburst]. I am not a dime a dozen! I am Willy Loman, and you are Biff Loman!

[BIFF starts for WILLY, but is blocked by HAPPY. In his fury, BIFF seems on the verge of attacking his father]

Biff. I am not a leader of men, Willy, and neither are you. You were never anything but a hard-working drummer who landed in the ash can like all the rest of them! I'm one dollar an hour, Willy! I tried seven states and couldn't raise it. A buck an hour! Do you gather my meaning? I'm not bringing home any prizes any more, and you're going to stop waiting for me to bring them home!

Willy [directly to BIFF]. You vengeful, spiteful mut!

[BIFF breaks from HAPPY. WILLY, in fright, starts up the stairs. BIFF grabs him]

Biff [at the peak of his fury]. Pop, I'm nothing! I'm nothing, Pop. Can't you understand that? There's no spite in it any more. I'm just what I am, that's all.

[BIFF's fury has spent itself, and he breaks down, sobbing, holding on to WILLY, who dumbly fumbles for BIFF's face]

Willy [astonished]. What're you doing? What're you doing? [To LINDA] Why is he crying?

Biff [crying, broken]. Will you let me go, for Christ's sake? Will you take that phony dream and burn it before something happens? [Struggling to contain himself, he pulls away and moves to the stairs] I'll go in the morning. Put him—put him to bed.

[Exhausted, BIFF moves up the stairs to his room]

Willy [after a long pause, astonished, elevated]. Isn't that— isn't that remarkable? Biff—he likes me!

Linda. He loves you, Willy!

Happy [deeply moved]. Always did, Pop.

Willy. Oh, Biff! [Staring wildly] He cried! Cried to me. [He is choking with his love, and now cries out his promise] That boy—that boy is going to be magnificent!

[BEN appears in the light just outside the kitchen]

Ben. Yes, outstanding, with twenty thousand behind him.

Linda [sensing the racing of his mind, fearfully, carefully]. Now come to bed, Willy. It's all settled now.

Willy [finding it difficult not to rush out of the house]. Yes, we'll sleep. Come on. Go to sleep, Hap.

Ben. And it does take a great kind of a man to crack the jungle.

[In accents of dread, BEN's idyllic music starts up]

Happy [his arm around LINDA]. I'm getting married, Pop, don't forget it. I'm changing everything. I'm gonna run that department before the year is up. You'll see, Mom.

[He kisses her]

Ben. The jungle is dark but full of diamonds, Willy.

[WILLY turns, moves listening to BEN]

Linda. Be good. You're both good boys, just act that way, that's all.

Happy. 'Night, Pop.

[He goes upstairs]

Linda [to WILLY]. Come, dear.

Ben [with greater force]. One must go in to fetch a diamond out.

Willy [to LINDA, as he moves slowly along the edge of the kitchen, toward the door]. I just want to get settled down, Linda. Let me sit alone for a little.

Linda [almost uttering her fear]. I want you upstairs.

Willy [taking her in his arms]. In a few minutes, Linda. I couldn't sleep right now. Go on, you look awful tired.

[He kisses her]

Ben. Not like an appointment at all. A diamond is rough and hard to the touch.

Willy. Go on now. I'll be right up.

Linda. I think this is the only way, Willy.

Willy. Sure, it's the best thing.

Ben. Best thing!

Willy. The only way. Everything is gonna be—go on, kid, get to bed. You look so tired.

Linda. Come right up.

Willy. Two minutes.

[LINDA goes into the living-room, then reappears in her bedroom. WILLY moves just outside the kitchen door]

Willy. Loves me. [Wonderingly] Always loved me. Isn't that a remarkable thing? Ben, he'll worship me for it!

Ben [with promise]. It's dark there, but full of diamonds.

Willy. Can you imagine that magnificence with twenty thousand dollars in his pocket?

Linda [calling from her room]. Willy! Come up!

Willy [calling into the kitchen]. Yes! Yes. Coming! It's very smart, you realize that, don't you, sweetheart? Even Ben sees it. I gotta go, baby. 'By! 'By! *[Going over to BEN, almost dancing]* Imagine? When the mail comes he'll be ahead of Bernard again!

Ben. A perfect proposition all around.

Willy. Did you see how he cried to me? Oh, if I could kiss him, Ben!

Ben. Time, William, time!

Willy. Oh, Ben, I always knew one way or another we were gonna make it, Biff and I!

Ben [looking at his watch]. The boat. We'll be late.

[He moves slowly off into the darkness]

Willy [elegiacally, turning to the house]. Now when you kick off, boy, I want a seventy-yard boot, and get right down the field under the ball, and when you hit, hit low and hit hard, because it's important, boy. *[He swings around and faces the audience]* There's all kinds of important people in the stands, and the first thing you know . . . *[Suddenly realizing he is alone]* Ben! Ben, where do I . . . ? *[He makes a sudden movement of search]* Ben, how do I . . . ?

Linda [calling]. Willy, you coming up?

Willy [uttering a gasp of fear, whirling about as if to quiet her]. Sh! *[He turns around as if to find his way; sounds, faces, voices, seem to be swarming in upon him and he flicks at them, crying, Sh! Sh! Suddenly music, faint and high, stops him. It rises in intensity, almost to an unbearable scream. He goes up and down on his toes, and rushes off around the house]* Shhh!

Linda. Willy?

[There is no answer. LINDA waits.

BIFF gets up off his bed. He is still in his clothes. HAPPY sits up. BIFF stands listening]

Linda [with real fear]. Willy, answer me! Willy!

[There is the sound of a car starting and moving away at full speed]

Linda. No!

Biff [rushing down the stairs]. Pop!

[As the car speeds off, the music crashes down in a frenzy of sound, which becomes the soft pulsation of a single cello string. BIFF slowly returns to his bedroom. He and HAPPY gravely don their jackets. LINDA slowly walks out of her room. The music has developed into a dead march. The leaves of day are appearing over everything. CHARLEY and BERNARD, somberly dressed, appear and knock on the kitchen door. BIFF and HAPPY slowly descend the stairs to the kitchen as CHARLEY and BERNARD enter. All stop a moment when LINDA, in clothes of mourning, bearing a little bunch of roses, comes through the draped doorway into the kitchen. She goes to CHARLEY and takes his arm. Now all move toward the audience, through the wall-line of the kitchen. At the limit of the apron, LINDA lays down the flowers, kneels, and sits back on her heels. All stare down at the grave]

REQUIEM

Charley. It's getting dark, Linda.

[LINDA doesn't react. She stares at the grave]

Biff. How about it, Mom? Better get some rest, heh? They'll be closing the gate soon.

[LINDA makes no move. Pause]

Happy [deeply angered]. He had no right to do that. There was no necessity for it. We would've helped him.

Charley [grunting]. Hmmm.

Biff. Come along, Mom.

Linda. Why didn't anybody come?

Charley. It was a very nice funeral.

Linda. But where are all the people he knew? Maybe they blame him.

Charley. Naa. It's a rough world, Linda. They wouldn't blame him.

Linda. I can't understand it. At this time especially. First time in thirty-five years we were just about free and clear. He only needed a little salary. He was even finished with the dentist.

Charley. No man only needs a little salary.

Linda. I can't understand it.

Biff. There were a lot of nice days. When he'd come home from a trip; or on Sundays, making the stoop; finishing the cellar; putting on the new porch; when he built the extra bathroom; and put up the garage. You know something, Charley, there's more of him in that front stoop than in all the sales he ever made.

Charley. Yeah. He was a happy man with a batch of cement.

Linda. He was so wonderful with his hands.

Biff. He had the wrong dreams. All, all, wrong.

Happy [almost ready to fight BIFF]. Don't say that!

Biff. He never knew who he was.

Charley [stopping HAPPY's movement and reply. To BIFF]. Nobody dast blame this man. You don't understand: Willy was a salesman. And for a salesman, there is no rock bottom to the life. He don't put a bolt to a nut, he don't tell you the law or give you medicine. He's a man way out there in the blue, riding on a smile and a shoeshine. And when they start not smiling back—that's an earthquake. And then you get yourself a couple of spots on your hat, and you're finished. Nobody dast blame this man. A salesman is got to dream, boy. It comes with the territory.

Biff. Charley, the man didn't know who he was.

Happy [infuriated]. Don't say that!

Biff. Why don't you come with me, Happy?

Happy. I'm not licked that easily. I'm staying right in this city, and I'm gonna beat this racket! [He looks at BIFF, his chin set] The Loman Brothers!

Biff. I know who I am, kid.

Happy. All right, boy. I'm gonna show you and everybody else that Willy Loman

did not die in vain. He had a good dream. It's the only dream you can have—to come out number-one man. He fought it out here, and this is where I'm gonna win it for him.

Biff [with a hopeless glance at HAPPY, bends toward his mother]. Let's go, Mom.

Linda. I'll be with you in a minute. Go on, Charley. [He hesitates] I want to, just for a minute. I never had a chance to say good-by.

[CHARLEY moves away, followed by HAPPY. BIFF remains a slight distance up and left of LINDA. She sits there, summoning herself. The flute begins, not far away, playing behind her speech]

Linda. Forgive me, dear. I can't cry. I don't know what it is, but I can't cry. I don't understand it. Why did you ever do that? Help me, Willy, I can't cry. It seems to me that you're just on another trip. I keep expecting you. Willy, dear, I can't cry. Why did you do it? I search and search and I search, and I can't understand it, Willy. I made the last payment on the house today. Today, dear. And there'll be nobody home. [A sob rises in her throat]. We're free and clear. [Sobbing more fully, released] We're free. [BIFF comes slowly toward her] We're free . . . We're free . . .

[BIFF lifts her to her feet and moves out up right with her in his arms. LINDA sobs quietly. BERNARD and CHARLEY come together and follow them, followed by HAPPY. Only the music of the flute is left on the darkening stage as over the house the hard towers of the apartment buildings rise into sharp focus, and

THE CURTAIN FALLS]

A LIST OF SUGGESTED READINGS

The following list of books and articles is in no sense of the word a Bibliography of Modern Drama. It is intended to provide additional reading for the amateur in search of enlightenment on various aspects of the theater, playwrighting, and the particular playwrights here anthologized. It is intended to be completely practical: publications in foreign languages and those books not apt to be available in general libraries have been rigorously excluded. Conversely, the titles included under at least Section A should form the basis of any collection of secondary material on the modern drama.

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